“This House Is An Adobe House:” A History of the Abeyta Family on *Ojito del Caballo*, 1882 to the present

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Abstract

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In 1882 a family of five moved onto a piece of land that would become known as *Ojo del Caballo*, named after the spring where the family took their horses for water. Today, Barbarita and Joce Abeytia’s great-great-great-great grandchildren can be found picking piñon nuts, feeding horses, and visiting with their *tias* and *tios* on the same land their ancestors built the first adobe house on in the late nineteenth century. This thesis demonstrates that the Abeyta family remember and understand the many struggles the family have been forced to undertake to keep this land primarily in terms of property relations and temporality. Each generation of owners has had to deal with at least one instance of the land nearly having been lost, and each of these instances is the result of an encounter with private property relations. These moments are theorized as *chronotones*, or as instances of colliding temporal logics, where the linear and synchronizing temporality of capital collides with the Abeyta family’s own nonsynchronous temporal terrain. This is achieved primarily through the analysis of oral history interviews and photographs. On a continent beset by increasingly rapid, fragmentary, and often violent change, theirs is a story of rare continuity won through committed, if costly, struggle. Through stories of mysterious human encounters, of struggle in the face of capitalist property relations and incessant accumulation, and of conflicting temporalities, this thesis honors the family’s commitment to their land and to each other.

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Dedication

For Derek Ellison and Costanza Graziani.
May we meet again.

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Introduction
On Photography, Oral History Practice, and Mysterious Encounters

This thesis is an oral history and photography-based project about a family's land. The land in question was named *Ojo del Caballo*[1] by Joce and Barbarita Abeytia[2] after they moved onto it in 1882. It is located just outside the city of Las Vegas, New Mexico at the end of county road 144. Although my research question changed numerous times over the course of this research, it eventually became 'how do the Abeyta family remember and understand the various struggles to keep *Ojito del Caballo* in the family, and how do they speak of its importance today?' For simplicity's sake I will use 'Abeyta family' to refer to the descendants of Joce and Barbarita, even though many of them no longer carry the Abeyta name. I met the family while I was pursuing a photography-based project about the city of Las Vegas. The more stories they told me about their land and the traditions they have kept alive, the more I questioned my own historical knowledge and wondered about the assumptions hidden behind my conception of history. I wanted to understand why the family had had to struggle so hard to keep their land as well as what kept them going in their struggle, especially when most people around them had lost access to the land their ancestors inhabited. When I asked if they would be interested in participating in the project, the family generously shared their time, their memories, their photographs, their family documents, and their land with me. At the end of our interview, Diana Padilla was reflecting on how the ranch has always been a gathering place for their family and for others when she remarked that:

> (Diana) "I think it's because our family is this... force that you almost get sucked in, and then you can't get out. […] My grandpa Junior picked up every stray he found. And then

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[1] Also called '*Ojito del Caballo*' or simply 'the ranch' by the Abeyta family. All three names are used interchangeably from here on.

[2] The spelling of the Abeyta family name changed from 'Abeytia' to Abeyta in the early twentieth century.

> his son did it - my uncle Jimmy - he picked up every stray he found. And then my uncle Gilbert did it. […] We all do. We all pick up people."[3]

With the benefit of hindsight, it is now obvious that I was one such stray wandering around looking for answers when an acquaintance suggested I call Leticia Padilla. Leticia invited me to her home to look through old family photographs and documents, and eventually connected me with the broader Abeyta family. I was then twenty-eight and five years into a freelance journalism career, and I had a lot of questions about photographic practice, journalistic practice, history, faith, and myself. I was looking for teachers, if at first in a mostly unconscious way. It quickly became apparent to me that I needed better tools if I was going to understand the stories shared with me, which is in large part what led me to graduate school. But the relationship with the Abeytas was never a one-way street. Leticia, who took on the responsibility of organizing family documents because of recent tumult on *Ojito del Caballo*, was also looking for someone to share the weight of recording and memorializing the family's stories. At the end of our first interview when I asked if there was anything she wanted to add, Leticia paused and then said:

> (Leticia) "There's one thing, Gabriel, that's just baffling to me in my life right now. How I am right now, sitting here with you, talking about my family? How did it happen that my family became important? When they were never in that place. And I'm not talking just about myself. I'm talking about my *antepasados* - my ancestors. I'm talking about them. They still live on. They're going to live on through a kid from Canada! How the hell did that happen? And I want to add that in there. That I'm amazed... of that. I'm amazed that that has happened. I'm amazed that you came to Montezuma, where I grew up. How could that be? And I really think that God has his hand in it. And that you are a part of that. And so I'm really here, more grateful than ever. Because we can tell our story. Because maybe it's not important to anybody else but us, but it's important. And that we lived it and that my ancestors lived it and they had the hard times and they did whatever they had to do to survive."[4]

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[3] Diana Padilla, Interviewed by Gabriel Ellison-Scowcroft, Las Vegas, New Mexico, January 25, 2022.

[4] Leticia Padilla, Interviewed by Gabriel Ellison-Scowcroft, Las Vegas, New Mexico, January 16, 2022.

I still think the scales are heavily weighted towards the generosity of the Abeytas, but it is also clear we chose each other out of need, curiosity, and something mysterious that need not be over-contemplated. Chapter one elaborates on the family's Catholic faith and traditions, but it is important to note that faith and mystery were at the beginning of our encountering each other and have remained important to me throughout the process of this project. Before meeting the Abeytas, I had never had an experience with any Christian tradition that left me curious. I did not grow up in a faith tradition and considered myself agnostic, if also occasionally hostile to institutionalized forms of religion. In terms of this thesis, my encounter with the family's faith and faith practices has led me to think carefully about the difference between mystery and mystification, or between that which can be demystified and that which cannot.

Leticia's above reflection also provides insight into "what makes oral history different."[5] She attributes importance to the *telling* of the family's story, demonstrating that the "telling of the story is part of the story being told."[6] This is not to claim that the oral histories we produced together were recorded simply for posterity, nor that they are reproduced and analysed here so that the family can speak for themselves. They aren't speaking for themselves in a vacuum, they are speaking "to, with, and through"[7] me as the historian. Rather, Leticia and my reflections should make clear the shared[8] process constitutive of oral history practice – including what happens long before any interview occurs – where all participants play a role in the "active process of creation of meanings."[9] What I think Leticia is getting at is that the fact that the

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[5] Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 32.
[6] Portelli, 40.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Michael H. Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 179.
[9] Portelli, 37.

Abeyta's stories and memories have been told in the context of an oral history practice is an important part of the process of making meaning. This can, however, also only go so far. It is obvious that, to Leticia, the recognition of the specific nature of what she and her family have experienced and lived is equally important to her. It is both the telling and what is being told that – more than simply being important – cannot be separated in oral history practice.

In January 2022 I conducted eight oral history interviews with two generations of the Abeyta family. The five from the older generation are siblings: Leticia Padilla, Velma Salazar, Theresa Hernandez, Ralph Abeyta and Victor Abeyta. The younger generation are cousins: Diana Padilla, daughter of Leticia, Joseph Abeyta, son of Victor, and Shirley Hernandez, daughter of Theresa. In this thesis excerpts from these interviews are placed alongside photographs and other archival documents as the primary sources of analysis. The two chapters roughly address the two clauses of my research question in chronological order, although I have both expanded and specified each in order to make them approachable. Chapter one addresses the history of struggle on and over *Ojito del Caballo* through an analysis of temporalities coming into conflict. Joce and Barbarita moved onto *Ojito del Caballo* just as the full weight of industrial capitalism and its mechanisms of enclosure and accumulation arrived in the then Territory of New Mexico and across the newly conquered 'west.' Every generation since Joce and Barbarita has had to deal with at least one instance of the land nearly having been lost, and I link these struggles through an analysis of the synchronizing temporality of capital. Chapter two explores themes of labour or work as they appear in the oral history interviews and photographs. First, the gendered division of labour in the history of struggle on the land, where Abeyta women have played leading roles generation after generation. This section is a response to Leticia's reminder that Abeyta women need to be remembered as central to the story of the ranch. Second, an exploration of how *Ojito del Caballo* is often linked to memories of labour, hard work, and scarcity. While these accumulated experiences have been difficult, and indeed sometimes violent, they have also provided insight into ways of being that the Abeyta family deem valuable, if not essential.

Before there was oral history, there was photography. I came to this work first as a photographer and only after as a historian, and a large part of my time in graduate school was spent thinking through what photographs are and what they do. Of all the writers on photography, and indeed on anything else, I have engaged with over the course of my MA, none has been as influential as John Berger. His thought is peppered throughout this thesis in the form of quotes and epigraphs, but it also exists beneath it on a deeper level. In particular, I take inspiration from how his writing always intertwines the historical with that which is outside of history, or what he sometimes calls the timeless.[10] In his essay *Uses of Photography*, Berger argues for a need to think photographs radially, that is to build context around photographs in a similar way to how the mind builds context around a memory, through "an enormous number of associations all leading to the same event."[11] To Berger, we need to become conscious of this process – of how we, mostly unconsciously, place photographs into webs of meaning. Photographs, by virtue of what they are, remind us of the need to "see across"[12] historical time and all our assumptions therein. They also contain the potential to marvel at "fathomless human encounters”[13] and make tangible, in a ruptural way, the fathoms between different forms of experience that require our participation to bridge.

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[10] John Berger, *Hold Everything Dear: Dispatches on Survival and Resistance*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 2007), 4.

[11] John Berger, *About Looking,* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 1992), 64.

[12] John Berger and Jean Mohr, *Another Way of Telling*, (New York: Pantheon, 1982), 106.

I have employed this radial method for the photographs in this thesis. They are meant to act in tandem with actual memories and stories as expressed in the oral history interviews, so that the radial context I have curated often includes the voices of those photographed, or their descendants. I do not mean that these oral histories were conducted as photo elicitation or that the oral history excerpts specifically address the contents of individual photographs. Rather, that the aim is for the oral histories to work with the photographs to enliven the constellation of meaning it is possible to glean from their collaboration. Above all I have sought to avoid tautology, which is, unfortunately, one of the most common (mis)uses of photographs. Photographs are not the sum of measurable parts and neither should they be employed as straightforward representations. Rather, they bear traces of infinite encounters and immeasurable dynamics of motion. They ask questions of history, relationality, memory, production, circulation, and consumption.

Rethinking the photographic encounter was key in my journey through unpacking my questions about photographs – my own, and those of others. When I first came to Las Vegas to take pictures, I came with the mindset of a photojournalist or documentary photographer. Although much of my training in this field was based on unspoken assumptions rather than overt ideological or ontological commitments, it would be safe to say I came to the work with a standard interpretation of photographs as representational truth, in part because I did not know how to think otherwise. As has been remarked countless times by countless others, photographs are never the simple bearers of truth, and in fact this conversation around the (un)truthfulness of photographs mostly distracts from the potential they hold, or just misses the mark entirely. For Ariella Azoulay, "[t]ruth is not to be found in the photograph", but traces or refutations of potential truth can be found when the photograph is theorized as a "seal – forever provisional – of actions or traces that are available for reconstruction"[14] by employing what she terms the "civil gaze."[15] Azoulay's framework has helped me to see the need to expand the photographic encounter beyond the moment the photographer takes the picture and the later viewing of the image. What occasioned the photograph, how, why, where, and in what form it has been kept and/or displayed, and what practices or rituals it has become a part of are all factors that contain the potential to dramatically change any meaning attributed to a photograph.[16] Any meaning that is gleaned is thus the result of a dialogic process in a constant state of change, where the photograph is destabilized as a secure source of knowledge and instead repositioned as holding traces which spectators then exercise their imaginations on in order to negotiate meaning.

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[13] Martha Langford, *Scissors, Paper, Stone: Expressions of Memory in Contemporary Photographic Art,* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 249.

The photographs in this thesis fit into two broad categories: those taken by me and those from Leticia Padilla's family collection. The former in color and square, the latter in black and white and all manner of dimensions. This is partly for clarity and to eschew the need for attribution every time a photograph is shown, but also because I was primarily interested in the older photographs in Leticia's collection – all of which are monochrome. The occasion for my photographs, as I have already noted, began as a process of asking questions. I moved to Montezuma, New Mexico in 2008 to attend an international school called a United World College and I decided to return to the area in 2017 to photograph after I read a few snippets of history and realized I had learned next to nothing about where I had lived for almost two years. I spent a summer in Las Vegas and returned as often as I could over the next three years. I photographed baptisms and hunting trips, parties and landscapes, card games and football. I made portraits and started collecting small interviews. In the summer of 2019, I met Leticia Padilla and photographed an annual pilgrimage led by her brother Victor Abeyta later that year, and I took more pictures when I conducted interviews with the family in 2022.

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[14] Ariella Azoulay, *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography*, Translated by Louise Bethlehem, (London: Verso, 2012), 57.

[15] Ibid.

[16] See Elizabeth Edwards, "Photographs and the Sound of History." *Visual Anthropology Review* 21, no. 1-2 (2005): 27–46. doi: 10.1525/var.2005.21.1-2.27, Gillian Rose, *Doing Family Photography: The Domestic, the Public and the Politics of Sentiment*, (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2010), and Martha Langford, *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums*, Second ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press), 2008.

The photographs and documents that Leticia Padilla shared with me were collected from her elders who entrusted them to her before passing away. Her aunts Antonia and Cecilia were particularly careful collectors of the family's memorabilia and were, before Leticia's generation, the previous owners, along with their siblings, of *Ojito del Caballo*. The photographs from this collection that appear in this thesis were taken by many different photographers, but which photographs were taken by which people has been lost to the past. Leticia and her siblings recall hearing that many of the photographers were family members who did not live on *Ojito del Caballo* who would bring cameras to the ranch when they visited and then leave or send prints afterwards. At other times it was neighbors or friends of the family from town who would do the same. They also recall hearing that soldiers stationed at the nearby Camp Luna would visit – as Shirley Hernandez tells it in chapter two, to party – and bring cameras with them when they did, also leaving or sending prints. It seems that many of these photographs were taken as much to remember time spent with the Abeyta family as to be able to share with them. However familiar the photographers might have been, they were all almost certainly taken by people who did not live on *Ojito del Caballo*. Leticia came to be the holder of this collection both because she was taking care of her aunts in their old age and because she was helping them through a court case that brought the ownership of the ranch into question. After the conclusion of this court case, Leticia used some of the photographs to write a family history where they play a prominent role. To Leticia and to the Abeyta family, the photographs have become embedded in the practice of remembering and honoring their ancestors' struggles and sacrifices on and over *Ojito del Caballo*. They also act, as Joseph Abeyta remarks below, on the family in ways that allow them to bring the past into the present:

> (Joseph) "You break out that book, the one that my *tia* Letty made, you start looking through these people, these faces, and I'm like 'man that guy looks just like me!' I feel like I look just like him, and that looks like my kid right there. You still feel like you're connected to it, you know? Like I say not a lot of people could say that anymore. Ranches like this don't stand the test of time. A lot of people - like I say, some do it for profit, some do it just because they can't afford it, some people just die off and it goes to the next family or somebody buys it out."[17]

This excerpt also contains clues that point to the answers I have given to my research question. Joseph makes reference to time, and in particular to the fragmentation he sees all around him of things that do not "stand the test of time." The exception, as he tells it, is *Ojito del Caballo*. When Joseph says that he feels "connected to it" he is talking about the land via the photographs of older generations on the land. The Abeyta family's memories of the struggles over the land are all in some way related to property law, which as will be demonstrated in chapter one, necessitates conflict. Perhaps paradoxically, the family have fought hard to save their land in part because it provides them with the opportunity to experience time differently –

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[17] Joseph Abeyta, Interviewed by Gabriel Ellison-Scowcroft, Las Vegas, New Mexico, January 23, 2022.

through work, through family relations, and through a sense of connectedness to the past and to the future that is otherwise being annihilated.

As should be clear by now, my approach is heterodox. This is partly intentional and mostly the result of trying to simultaneously answer all my burning questions at once – on photographic and journalistic practice, on historical work and the nature of oral history, on how to know which metaphysical claims to get behind about the nature of reality, on what has happened on *Ojito del Caballo*, on how to think through the Abeyta family's memories and commitment, and on the history and ontology of capitalism, to name but a few. My process has been, to use an old cliché, something of a fishing expedition. The metaphor seems apt to describe historical work: mostly lonely and silent repetition with fleeing moments of excitement that, every once in a while and if you are lucky, bring results. But equally true is that the story I am trying to tell in collaboration with the Abeyta family is one that requires posing many questions at once, and so necessarily carries the potential to contemplate history and the peculiar, dazzling, and agonizing ways history is lived. This thesis carries the residue of the sometimes happy and sometimes unhappy confusions born of my forays into these questions. If language is the medium that brings people the closest to an experience of another's mind, and writing is the most precise (well, hopefully anyway) curated experience of language, than it is impossible that this text can be separated from my own tribulations of mind. I hope the reader will bear with me.

Chapter 1
Beginnings, Temporalities, and *Chronotones*

> *"And in the specific purgatory of the modern world, created and maintained by corporate capitalism, every injustice is grounded in that modern unilinear view of time for which the only relation conceivable is that between cause and effect. In contrast to this, in defiance of this, the 'single synchronic act' is that of loving."*[18]

Introduction

> (Gabriel) "…and so my first question is: if the ranch - if *Ojo del Caballo* - were a story, how would you tell it?"
>
> (Leticia) "Of course I would begin with the elders. With Joce and Barbarita Abeyta, who were fortunate enough to obtain two parcels of land at 160 acres each for their family. When they were approved for the land grant committee for the two parcels of land they packed up their wagon, and them and their three children made their way up here. I'm assuming he had already kind of scoped out the place to know that there was a spring. And so that was probably why they chose here. And then they started very, very poorly - and you'll see in the affidavits how there was very... there were no trees. It was just open land. And they thought that goats would be a good thing to bring, and they started with a few goats."

Leticia Padilla (b. 1958) – Abeyta family historian and matriarch – begins the story of *Ojo del Caballo* with Joce and Barbarita Abeytia.[19] They are Leticia's ancestors and were the heads of a family that built a house, farmed, and raised goats on a plot of land a few miles north-west of the city of Las Vegas, New Mexico. The name of this plot of land was first recorded on a property claim on March 26, 1883, as *Ojito del Caballo*. The oral histories recorded for this thesis were created with eight of Joce and Barbarita's descendants who retain a connection – many through direct ownership – to the same land today. The starting point of this research concerned the Abeyta family's various struggles to keep *Ojito del Caballo* in the family since moved onto the land in 1882 and Joce Abeytia recorded his property claim in 1883. This chapter will elaborate on those struggles – on what produced them, on how the Abeyta family tell the importance of keeping the land, and how these struggles can be further understood through a framework of temporalities coming into conflict with one another.

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[18] John Berger, *Keeping a Rendezvous*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991), 35.

[19] The spelling of the Abeyta family name changed from 'Abeytia' to Abeyta in the early twentieth century.

Massimiliano Tomba's work on temporality is helpful in clarifying the framework of temporalities generating friction when they come into conflict. He defines temporality in the following way: "[b]ut there is no such thing as having used time well or poorly. Time is used in different ways, and this qualitative difference impresses upon time a rhythm and a direction: a *temporality*."[20] Following this, it is possible to consider a plurality of temporalities – of rhythms underpinning ways of living and working and experiencing time. The capitalist mode of production has produced, for the entirety of the Abeytas' presence on *Ojito del Caballo*, the dominant and synchronizing temporality in northern New Mexico as well as across the world. It is the temporality of linear and unidirectional progress – one of capitalism's primary real abstractions. It is also the temporality undergirding processes of perennial accumulation and enclosure – of colonialism and imperialism, past and present.

Ernst Bloch described the universalizing project of modernity as being inseparable from the rise of capitalism and its violent hierarchizing of temporalities that create the illusion of linear progress.[21] He also argued that "nonsynchronisms" or the activation of other temporal logics, nonsynchronous to the dominant and synchronizing temporality of capital, takes place in times of crisis.[22] What is particular about capitalism as compared with other modes of production is not that it produces a hierarchy of temporalities, but rather that the unilinear temporality sitting atop its hierarchy is so brutally universalizing. The Abeyta family repeatedly refer to nonsynchronisms in their recounting of struggles to keep *Ojito del Caballo*. Their oral histories move between past, present and future in ways that defy the dominant linearity. The fact of these different conceptions of time, of different layered temporalities, produces the potential for what Tomba has termed "*chronotones*, from the Greek *chronos*, or "time", and *tonos*, or "tension" - that is, the friction generated by the sliding of different temporal layers."[23] This chapter is concerned with framing the moments of struggle in the Abeyta family's and *Ojito del Caballo*'s intertwined histories as *chronotones*. Even though the particulars of each *chronotone* are unique, they can be understood as linked through this framework of temporalities coming into conflict with one another.

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[20] Massimiliano Tomba, *Insurgent Universality: An Alternative Legacy of Modernity*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 7.

[21] Ernst Bloch and Mark Ritter. "Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to Its Dialectics," *New German Critique* 11, no. 11 (1977), 25.

[22] Bloch and Ritter, 26.

This chapter is structured around a chronology of *chronotones* in order to better understand the story of how the Abeytas came to own *Ojito del Caballo* and why that ownership has been so fraught with conflicts and struggle. I was initially interested only in the story of the ranch, but as the research progressed, I found it impossible to tell that story without looking at its origins and events that preceded it. The first two sections of this chapter deal with this 'pre-history' of *Ojito del Caballo* in terms of how the Abeyta family tell their story and my own filling-in of the historical context that surrounded them. Spanish colonization of New Mexico – a process here understood as part of capitalist world-ecology's *longue durée* – also produced *chronotones*. But as we will see, prior to land becoming the primary commodity for private accumulation with the full-scale arrival of financial and industrial capital, Spanish and then

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[23] Tomba, 10.

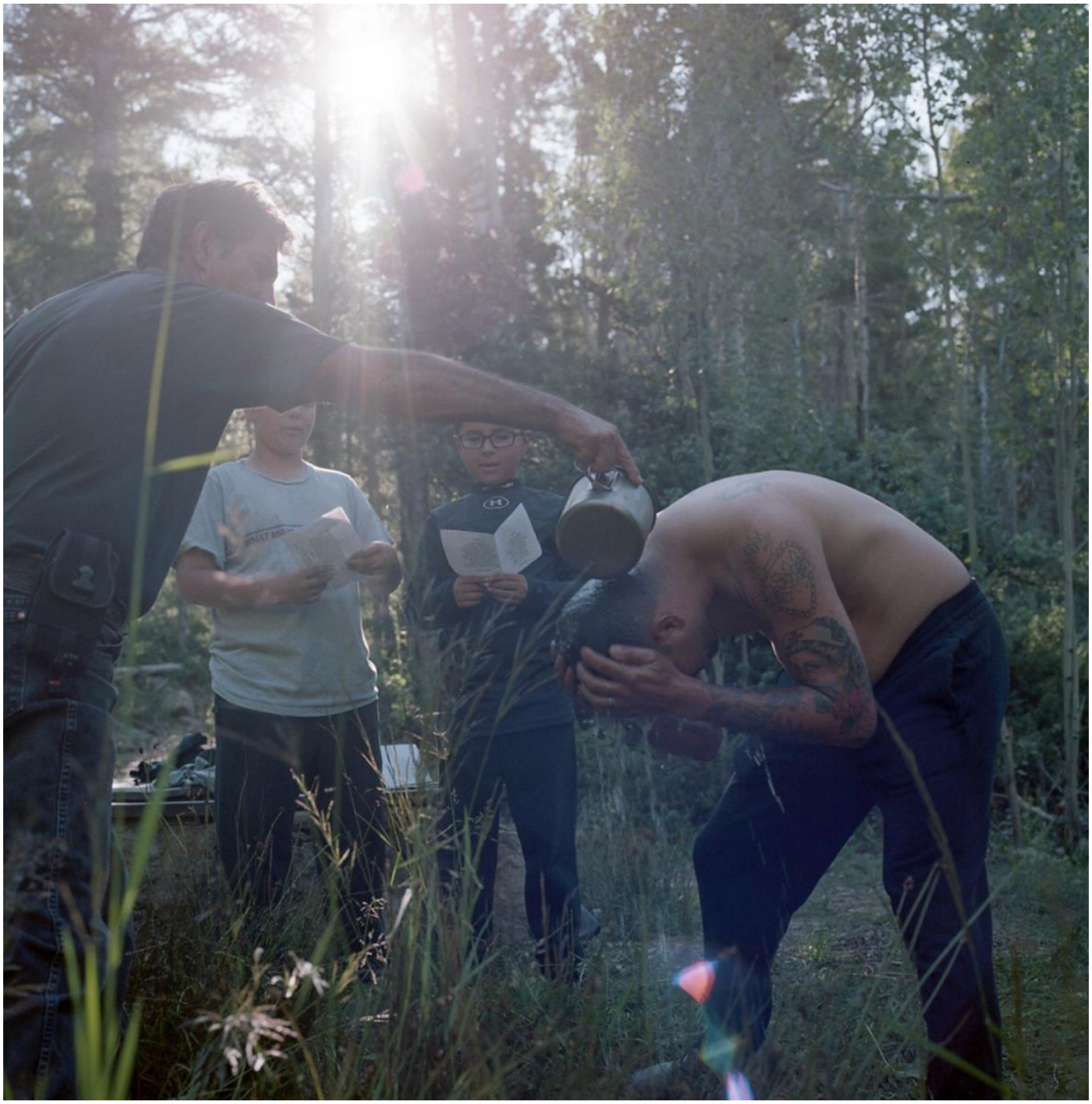
Mexican attempts to synchronize life and living in New Mexico never attained the successthat would begin in the late nineteenth century. This is not to understate the profound disruption and violence of the Spanish colonial period and its aftermath, but rather to point to a qualitative shift in power undergirded by the unilinear time of progress that arrived with US American invasion, railroads, barbed wire, and finance capital. The creation of *Ojito del Caballo* – i.e. the process of the family moving onto the ranch – was itself the result of a *chronotone* produced by the arrival of these powerful forces. Similarly, *chronotones* are what happened when the Abeyta family repeatedly activated nonsynchronous temporal logics over the course of the past 141 years to resist the dominant temporality of unilinear progress.

Temporality and struggle are thus linked. The Abeyta family chose again and again to struggle to save their land in response to a temporality that fragments everything from social relations to subjective experience. This temporality lies beneath the attempt to make all life subservient to profit. In the epigraph that opens this chapter, John Berger equates acts of resistance to capitalist modernity's fracturing of time to acts of love. The theoretical articulation of *chronotones* and their use in linking struggles on *Ojito del Caballo* are ultimately in service of exploring the Abeyta family's repeated acts of love. As we will see, Leticia Padilla played a central role in the most recent *chronotone* over the ranch. A central pillar of her capacity for struggle – to her capacity for acts of love, or as she puts it "if we take care of each other, it's going to be ok" – is the faith she inherited alongside *Ojito del Caballo* from Joce and Barbarita:

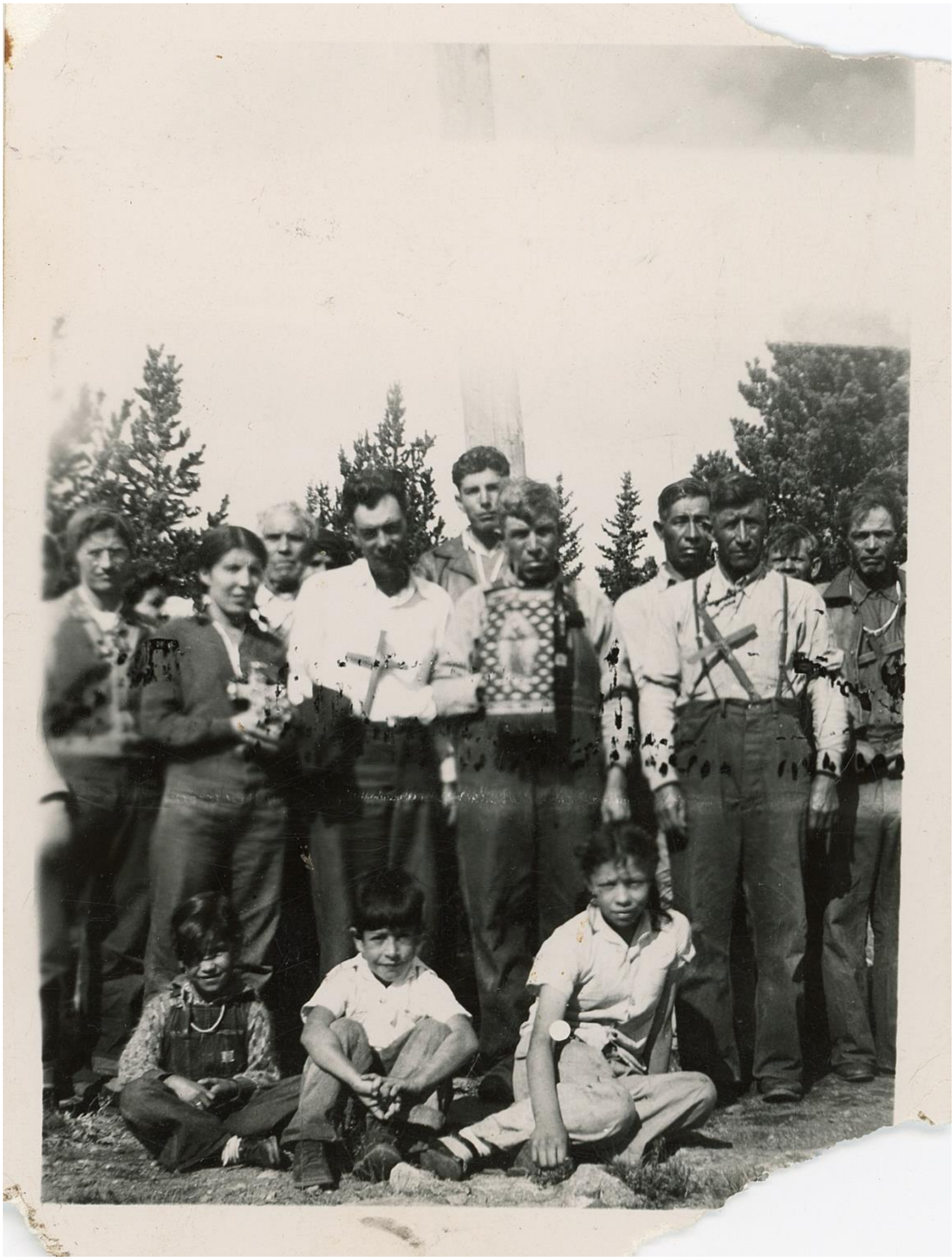
> (Leticia) "My faith is probably what defines me the most. Because without faith nothing else would have worked. My mom and dad made sure that we had faith. My dad in his way - he didn't go to church, my dad. But he did Hermit's Peak, and they did stations of the cross, and they would do midnight mass 'cause they would pray there. And the *morada* was a huge part of my dad's life. My mom on the other hand wanted us to go to church. And so we were raised with the seminarians - they were becoming priests. And

> so that's why we always knew it was going to be ok. Because our faith said that we believe and we're going to be ok. And if we take care of each other, it's going to be ok. So faith for me is the base of who I am."

Leticia refers to Hermit's Peak, which is a local mountain named after a pious Catholic hermit who lived in a cave on the mountain in the 1860s. While he was in the cave, local believers would make the journey from villages on the Las Vegas Land Grant to bring him food, and so a pilgrimage was started which was continued by various *Penitente* chapters after the Hermit's departure. *Moradas* are the churches of the *Penitentes.* The *morada de Santa Ana* is a stone's throw from *Ojito del Caballo,* and it is almost certainly through this religious society that they would have started participating in the annual pilgrimage. This is how I first came to know the Abeyta family. I was introduced to one of the few present-day members of the *morada de Santa Ana* who in turn told me that there was a family that was still undertaking the annual trip to Hermit's Peak. The Abeyta family are the last family to keep the pilgrimage tradition alive. I accompanied them in 2019 to photograph the pilgrimage for *Smithsonian Magazine,* which is how I met Leticia Padilla's brother Victor Abeyta, his son Joseph Abeyta, and his two grandsons Tristan and Tyler Abeyta.



1. ©Gabriel Ellison-Scowcroft. Victor Abeyta, Joseph Abeyta, Tyler Abeyta, and Tristan Abeyta on Hermit's Peak during their annual pilgrimage as part of *La Sociedad del Ermitaño*, September 2019. Scanned colour negative film.



2. Unknown photographer. Members of *La Sociedad del Ermitaño* atop Hermit's Peak, date unknown. Scanned silver gelatin print from Leticia Padilla's personal collection.

In the colour photograph above, Victor pours water from the spring on Hermit's Peak over Joseph, while Tristan and Tyler read *alabados*, or prayers. This is one of the rituals of the pilgrimage, alongside visiting the former hermit's cave and praying the stations of the cross several times. The second photograph was also taken on Hermit's Peak, but in the 1950s and by an unknown photographer. It is part of Leticia Padilla's collection of family photographs. In it the *socios,* or members of *La Sociedad del Ermitaño,* of that year's pilgrimage are standing together. The tallest figure at the back of the group is Jose Abeyta, Victor's father, and the woman second from the left is his *tia* Antonia Maes (née Abeyta). They would have been in their mid-to-late teens when the photograph was taken. I decided to pursue an oral history research project about *Ojito del Caballo* in part because of how Victor and Joseph spoke to me about their family and their faith while we were on Hermit's Peak. Their sense of connection to the pilgrimage and their dedication to continuing it, even though they were alone in doing so, intrigued me and led me to questions about what kept the Abeyta family going in their century-and-a-half struggle to save their land.

In the oral history interviews the Abeyta family and I produced together, I hear both material motives, in the sense of the land being a place to live, and immaterial, in the sense of the land providing proximity to past and future. This proximity to a sense of meaning and continuity can also be understood as that which denies capitalist modernity's violently linear conception of time and progress. The family often tell the importance of the land in ways that transcend practicality or any kind of tangible value. Rather, how they value *Ojito del Caballo* is often expressed in terms of a sense of continuity or of belonging to something from the past that will continue into the future. While the above photographs were not taken on *Ojito del Caballo*, they pay homage to the kind of tradition – or nonsynchronous temporality – that provides this sense of continuity, which can be activated in the face of *chronotones* that require struggle to resolve. Leticia Padilla remembers that her father lived his faith "in his way" through groups like *La Sociedad del Ermitaño* and the *Penitentes* – through ritual, community, and practice, and mostly outside of the institution of the church. This way of being lives on in his great-grandchildren as they walk the same path, say the same prayers, and sleep under the same sky he did every year for most of his adult life.

Origins: Barbarita and Joce Abeytia

A general observation from the oral history interviews is that *Ojito del Caballo* acts as a kind of magnet for documentation and stories for the Abeyta family. The bureaucracy of private property brought with it a perpetually lengthening trail of paperwork: tax bills, deeds, meetings minutes, surveys and notices, to name but a few. Alongside family photographs and remembered stories, these documents play an important role in the family's telling of their story today. In order to engage the Abeyta family's telling of this story and their reflections on continuity and struggle, the powerful forces at play at *Ojo del Caballo*'s origin must first be clarified – forces that have shaped the family's subsequent experiences and which have played an outsized role in creating the conditions of recurring struggle on and over the land before, but especially since, 1883. What came before *Ojito del Caballo* and how it came to be, both in terms of the Abeyta family's trajectory and in terms of what was happening around them, are the first questions to be addressed in this chapter. Below, Shirley Hernandez remembers how her uncle Dave told her of the Abeyta family's origins before the ranch after I asked her to tell the story of *Ojito del Caballo*:

> (Shirley) "My great-great grandfather came here, followed a horse to the spring and decided that's where they were going to be. I don't understand his story yet. I do a lot of genealogical research. And him and my great-great grandmother Barbarita are difficult to find. Mostly because that name is like 'John Smith' - there's a hundred thousand of them and you don't know were they from Bernalillo, were they from Santa Fe? My great-grandmother Laura - this was her place that my grandfather got it from - her brother, so he was my great-great uncle, my uncle Dave, he lived in Colorado. *Tio* Dave always had great stories. And he told me that our family, that the Abeytas, were from Taos. That my grandmother, she was a Martinez or got the Martinez last name, when she married my grandpo Felipe*,* he said he'd never seen so many Indians coming out of the mountains. Because they had a wedding here. And he said they were coming in groups. And everybody was nervous from town, the people who had come from town, because, you know, there was a lot of drama with Indians at the turn of the century. And he was like 'all these people had come out of the mountains, I had never seen so many Indians in my life!' And I was like 'why were Native people there?' And he said 'because your grandfather is from Taos.' But if you do the genealogical research, my mom's cousin - she went off on a completely different tangent. So she has them coming from like Las Cruces or something. And Auntie Letty went a different way too, and all I know is I can find Joce-Felipe Abeytia on the rolls for the Taos pueblo at the time that my great-great-grandfather would have been there, but I don't know that that's him. But I'm taking the oral history from my *tio* Dave and the genealogical research that I can find."[24]

As Shirley notes, Leticia Padilla's genealogical research leads her to believe that Joce Abeytia moved to Las Vegas from the territorial capital city of Santa Fe to which his father had moved a generation previously from what is today Ohkay Owingeh pueblo. Whether Joce Abeytia moved to Uppertown from Taos, Santa Fe or Las Cruces, it seems almost certain that he moved eastwards over the Sangre de Cristo mountains in the decade after US American conquest of the region, likely meeting Barbarita on the Las Vegas Land Grant. Although the research and stories within the Abeyta family diverge on the question of Joce's origins, it nevertheless also seems likely that he or his immediate ancestors lived on pueblo territory. It is even more unclear where Barbarita Abeytia, née Ortiz, was born or where her ancestors were from. What is known is that Joce and Barbarita were married in 1855 in what was then called Uppertown Las Vegas, which, at the time, was a small village a few miles north of the main town of Las Vegas on the

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[24] Charlene "Shirley" Hernandez, Interviewed by Gabriel Ellison-Scowcroft, Las Vegas, New Mexico, January 21, 2022.

Gallinas River. They had five children, two of whom did not survive beyond infancy. Joce and Barbarita spoke Spanish and raised their children Catholic. Their lives spanned a period of enormous changes to nearly every aspect of life, from land tenure to nationhood to identity. Here Leticia responds to my question about how she grew up thinking about her sense of identity as well as how her elders talked about themselves:

> (Leticia) "The household itself was first-language Spanish, then English. They - my mum and dad - considered themselves *mexicanos* or Spanish, or *españoles*, because they knew they came from Spain. *Mexicanos* for me was... *New* Mexico right? So we were a part of Mexico. So Mexicans is an ok word to use for the elders that were here because they were from Mexico until it became New Mexico. So it's not wrong for them to say that they were Mexicans or *españoles* because they were Spanish. And now they say Hispanic. I never knew the word Hispanic for a long time. But I don't care what it is. I am who I am. But they were never not proud of who they were. Maybe they were poor, but they had pride. And they were proud of their heritage and their culture. Because they were very faithful and they were proud of their faith. My dad and them went a little further because they were part of the societies - *la socediad del ermitaño*, *la socieded de la santa cruz* - *la morada*. And those things made them strong! I don't think that they ever minded being called anything, even if they were called Spanish or Mexican or whatever. And for us now it's just because when you do an application it'll ask you: are you white or black, are you Hispanic? And I never answer the white or the other, I just put Hispanic on the next one where it says ethnic- not ethnicity... Race! Because how I relate to myself now - I am Hispanic, I am a mix of Native American, Mexican, Hispanic from Spain. Sometimes we tease ourselves and we say we're mutts, right? Because we're a mix of everything."

Leticia's response illustrates the shifting boundaries of identity over the time the Abeyta's have been on *Ojito del Caballo*. Especially telling is her reflection on the word 'Hispanic' where she notes that she encountered the word later in life through the bureaucracy of self-identification and the options suggested therein, but also because the word has a particular meaning to her. Namely, that it means different ancestors would have identified themselves in numerous different ways. The identifiers 'Hispanic' or 'Spanish' or '*mexicano*' or 'hispano'[25] or '*españoles*' arose in particular historical and political contexts, such as Spanish and then US

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[25] A term unique to the Spanish speakers of New Mexico, and in particular northern New Mexico.

American colonization. Erlinda Gonzales-Berry and David Maciel's introduction to *Contested Homeland: A Chicano History of New Mexico* is key to unpacking this further. They stress the need for contemporary Nuevomexicanos to recognize "the spiritual and cultural links to the Mexican nation, but also [to reinscribe] the lost memory of those Native ancestors who were forced with cross and sword to perform an identity called Hispanidad."[26] This forced performance of Hispanidad began under Spanish colonization with a brutal and hierarchical caste system that differentiated between 'pure' European-descended Spaniards and those of 'mixed' Indigenous descent. The caste system was abolished after Mexico declared its independence from Spain leading to the common useage of *mexicano,* but this in turn morphed again in response to the white supremacy that arrived with US American rule. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and in particular in response to the delay of New Mexico's statehood which was in part justified on the grounds that most former Mexican citizens were of an inferior race, many Nuevomexicanos began to emphasize their Spanish ancestry as proof of their equal status with US Americans of European descent. Gonzales-Berry and Maciel note that "the unfortunate aspect of this charade is that later generations came to believe that the performance was the real thing", but that nevertheless "while the dialog in this performance was articulated by Nuevomexicano actors, the script was written by primarily Anglo directors."[27]

From Leticia Padilla's telling it does not appear that her Abeyta ancestors took the "charade" of overemphasis on Spanish ancestry particularly seriously. She explains that "I don't think that they ever minded being called anything" and that for herself "I don't care what it is. I am who I am." Instead, pride is articulated in the family's religious practices and cultural heritage, and in the community that surrounded them. Also significant is Leticia's reference to class, specifically that "maybe they were poor, but they had pride." Class is inserted, unprompted, into the narrative of how the family identified themselves, suggesting pride for what the family were able to achieve, or simply live, in defiance of class-based inequality.

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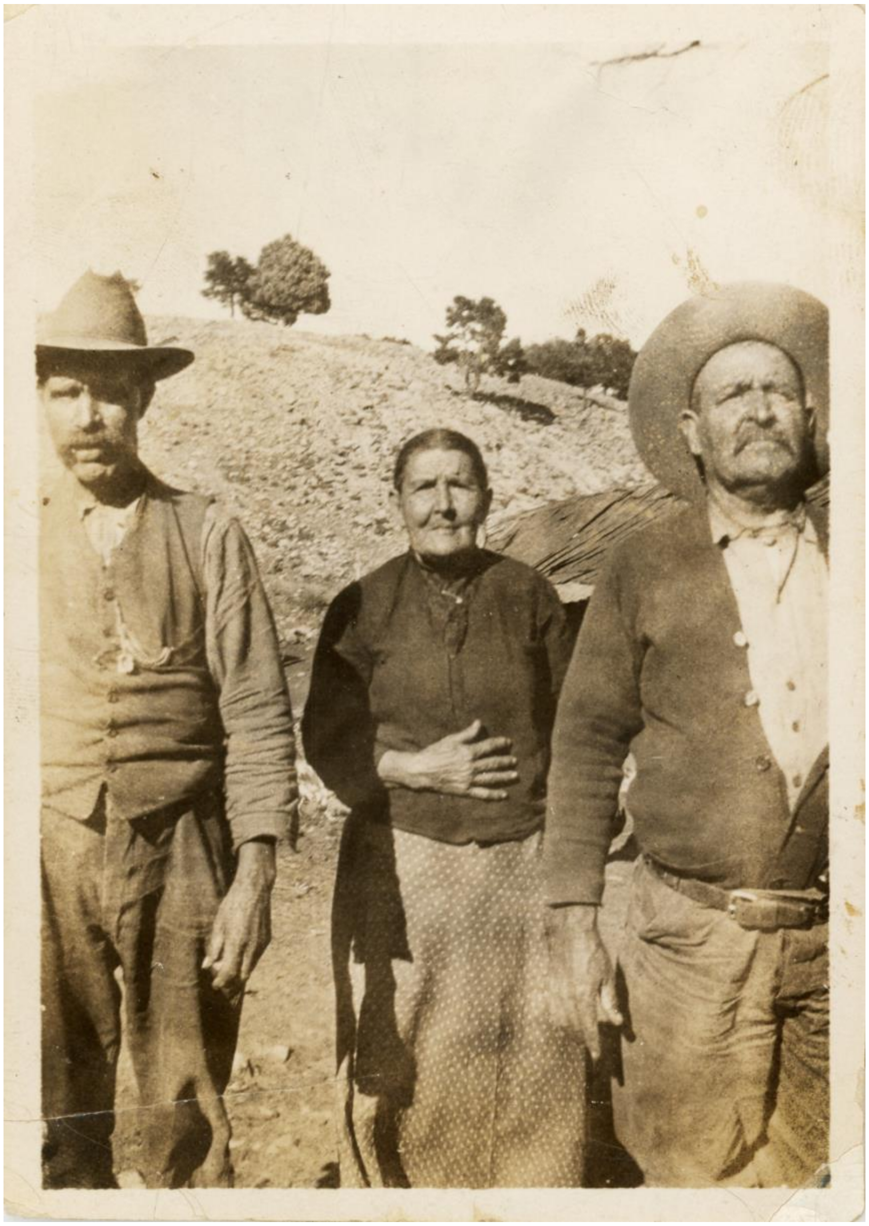
[26] Erlinda Gonzales-Berry and David Maciel eds., *The Contested Homeland* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 6.

[27] Gonzales-Berry and Maciel, 7.

Both Leticia Padilla and Shirley Hernandez begin the story of *Ojito del Caballo* with stories of settlement, and indeed the Abeyta family's story – and that of the ranch – is bound up in the history of settler colonialism and capitalism. Settler colonialism took different forms under Spanish, Mexican and then US American rule. The changing nature of land tenure under the governance of these different nations as well as the specific circumstances under which Joce and Barbarita came to own *Ojito del Caballo* is discussed in the following section. It is impossible to know exactly how Joce and Barbarita would have thought about themselves and important not to put too much emphasis on anachronistically applied labels from the present. They were both born in the United Mexican States and they both died in the United States of America. Rather than this being the result of migration, this was because their home was invaded and occupied by a foreign power. It seems that some of their ancestors were people who would today identify as Indigenous, that some of their ancestors would have called themselves Mexican – as they themselves might have done – and that they were also descended from Spanish colonists. Once married and living in Uppertown, Joce and Barbarita were likely landless and of a labouring or peasant class. As will be discussed, they were living on a community land grant where most of the land was held in common, although this was about to change drastically with the full-scale arrival of capitalism and the requisite violence of its property and social relations.



3. Unknown photographer. Felipe, Tomacita and Cayetano Abeyta on *Ojito del Caballo*, date unknown. Scanned silver gelatin print from Leticia Padilla's personal collection.

This is one of the oldest photographs in Leticia Padilla's collection. It is a yellowed silver gelatin print inherited from one of her aunts. Felipe, Tomacita, and Cayetano Abeyta are standing together at *Ojito del Caballo*. These are Barbarita and Joce's three surviving children standing on the land their parents moved them to in their teenage years. All three were born in Uppertown in 1868, 1858, and 1862 respectively. Felipe would – or perhaps by the time of this photograph already had – inherit the ranch after the passing of his mother in 1914. The occasion of the photograph, the photographer, and the precise date are unknown. It must, therefore, be treated with caution. Felipe appears younger here than in any of the other photographs of him in the family collection, hence the deduction that it is one of the oldest photographs therein. The composition is formal: Felipe and Cayetano flank Tomacita. Their postures are stiff. Cayetano seems to be standing especially straight, his chest puffed out slightly as he stares into the distance. It is almost as if he is standing to attention in front of a military superior. Felipe stands facing the camera, his hands by his sides, giving it a slightly skeptical look. Tomacita's hand is almost perfectly perpendicular to her brothers' and there is something about the just-so placement of the fingers that suggest it could rest there because of external direction. It seems unlikely that the Abeytas living on *Ojito del Caballo* would have had a camera at the time this picture was taken, and the formality, seriousness, and obvious self-conscious awareness of their still bodies intimate the presence of an unknown. Perhaps the unknown is the event of the photograph being taken, perhaps the photographer, or perhaps both. Whoever the photographer was and whatever their motivations, it is possible to see in the photographed expressions and presence of these three Abeytas the pride and steadfastness articulated by Leticia. Their clothes are worn but clean, the landscape of the ranch is far more barren than it is today, and their hands appear strong from lives lived with hard work. How the family came to be on the land this trio stand on is the subject of the following section.

Beginnings: Capitalism arrives on the Las Vegas Land Grant

The Abeyta family's oral histories about the ranch include recollections about the struggle to keep title to the land in the face of poverty, taxes, coercion from outside interests, inheritance disputes, greedy lawyers, or the Las Vegas Land Grant Board of Trustees. But almost entirely absent from these oral histories is the story of how the original procurement of title to the land, and its subsequent defence, occurred during an eruption of struggle on and over land all over the Territory of New Mexico and specifically in San Miguel County. The specific conditions and constraints under which the original settlers of the ranch came to possess title to the land their ancestors still own today are, in other words, barely remembered. Joce and Barbarita are Leticia Padilla's great-grandparents. The stories Leticia knows about these ancestors were passed down from her parents' generation or constructed from the research she has done into her family's history. This research included searching for titles, deeds and meeting minutes to trace *Ojito del Caballo*'s story as well as genealogical research to learn more about where her great-grandparents came from. Like the excerpt that opens this chapter, the memories and stories shared by Leticia and others illuminate some of the difficulties Joce and Barbarita surely faced: poverty, isolation, and access to water in an often dangerously dry geography being but a few examples. While doing research for the most recent struggle over *Ojito del Caballo* – a nearly twenty-year inheritance dispute fought in court and only resolved in 2017 – Leticia discovered affidavits submitted to the Las Vegas Land Grant Board of Trustees in 1909 by friends and neighbors of Joce and Barbarita. These affidavits describe the construction of a family house, fields of corn and beans cultivated for the family's sustenance, and a large herd of several hundred goats. The goats provided meat, milk and cheese, all of which the family relied on both for their survival and to exchange or sell in town. The affidavits state that the family had been living continuously on the land since moving there in 1882 and then claiming ownership of the land in 1883.[28] Their purpose was to prove that Barbarita Abeyta was eligible to receive a new title to *Ojito del Caballo* following the re-adjudication of the Las Vegas Land Grant in the early twentieth century, but while they describe how the Abeyta family had fulfilled all of the conditions required of them to maintain their ownership of the land, they do not go further back than Joce and Barbarita's arrival there in 1883.

Leticia describes these ancestors as having been "fortunate" to have acquired title to the land, but the specifics of that process – of how and why and as part of what historical forces – are not elaborated, or not remembered. And so, paradoxically in a project about a family's memories and recollections, the story of *Ojito del Caballo* here begins mostly, although not entirely, outside the realm of the Abeyta's memories as expressed in the oral history interviews. Shedding light on the rapid, violent, and dramatic changes that Joce and Barbarita were swept up in, and were also agents of, in late nineteenth-century San Miguel County, New Mexico, will show that far from being merely fortunate to have obtained title to *Ojito del Caballo*, Leticia Padilla's ancestors' presence on the ranch was only possible because they understood and were able to navigate the politically complex and violent changes to land tenure and life-making in late nineteenth-century New Mexico. This argument follows David Correia's work on property law and violence on the Tierra Amarilla land grant, where he argues that those who resisted enclosures "understood law and property as a tool of resistance and a site of social struggle."[29]

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[28] Las Vegas Land Grant Board of Trustees, (as cited in Leticia Padilla "Ojo del Caballo Property History 1883-2006, Ranch Documentation, Pictures, Maps, Translations, Self-published, 2006), "Jose Montoya, Jose Varela, and Barbarita Ortiz de Abeytia Affidavits to the Las Vegas Land Grant Board of Trustees, April 22, 1908," Leticia Padilla's personal collection.

[29] David Correia. *Properties of Violence: Law and Land Grant Struggle in Northern New Mexico* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2013), 30.

Joce and Barbarita were indeed fortunate to obtain title to *Ojito del Caballo,* just as their descendants are fortunate to retain title to the same land today, but this good fortune was never passive. Rather, it only existed, and exists today, as the result of near-constant struggle waged in defense of their land and their commitment to maintaining continuity from their family's past into the future. *Ojito del Caballo* has been one of the sites of this struggle, and so has pitted the Abeyta family time and again against the violence of accumulation and enclosure produced by, and constitutive of, capitalism. To Joseph Abeyta, the necessity of struggle to secure continuity – to secure a sense of time beyond that of the fleeting present or even of a single lifetime – and its link to the family land are expressed in terms of imagining the children of the future:

> (Joseph) "…because everybody just wants to secure not just the property, but the future. Like we've had this for so long... like I want to see a future. I'm sure my *tia* wants to see her grandkids play in that field where she put her house. Just like I want to see my kids out there playing in the field in front of my dad's house. So... it really is - it's not so much about securing the land. Because of course we love the land, and we grew up there and all of us grew up there and we all care about it. But it's about being able to have their kids be able to play there, you know?"

The question of how, or how not, the tumultuous and violent processes of land enclosure that produced the original deed to the *Ojo del Caballo* are remembered cannot be completely causally reconstructed. The distance in time between then and when the oral histories were conducted, the specificity and clarity of my questions as an interviewer, memory's inherent fallibility, the influence of education and culture more broadly, and the contingency of which stories and memories were recounted to which members of the family at which moments under what conditions are all factors, among others. But what is not remembered – or what has been erased or repressed from personal and historical and collective memory – must also be linked to "modernity's extraordinary capacity to make us forget,"[30] or modernity's extraordinary capacity to produce mis-rememberings. What is (not) remembered and how "experience, memory and history become combined in and digested by people who are the bearers of their own history"[31] are subjects that oral history practice is particularly suited to address. My historical intervention into *Ojito del Caballo*'s origins is not intended as a paternalistic gesture of reframing what is recounted in these oral histories in order to correct the narrative, but rather as a form of dialogue that reveals and expands the historical frame alongside the Abeyta family who bear their own history. The archival and historiographical components of the history that follows are nodes alongside stories and memories, or their absence, which when put together can open into a broader web of meaning.

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[30] Raj Patel and Jason W. Moore, *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: A Guide to Capitalism, Nature, and the Future of the Planet* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017), 39.

A public example of the misremembering alluded to above occurred while I was in Las Vegas for the oral history interviews with the Abeyta family. The City of Las Vegas' mayor Louie Trujillo cancelled an exhibition on the relationship between Las Gorras Blancas, a group who resisted land enclosures in San Miguel County in the late nineteenth century through the destruction of property of wealthy merchants and speculators who were enclosing the commons, and the Catholic religious order known as the Pentitentes. The Mayor claimed it would stoke unwanted "racial undertones" in San Miguel County, and that there was "little proof" [32] of any relationship between the two groups. These claims invert the historical record in two ways. First in terms of denying the relationship between these faith groups and political organizing in the face of land left in late nineteenth century New Mexico.[33] Second in terms of tacitly misidentifying the source of "racial undertones" by implying that it was Las Gorras Blancas, or the invocation of their memory, that inflamed racializing rhetoric and practices. It was, of course, the other way around. The term "Hispano," which we have already seen was an identifier that placed emphasis on Spanish European heritage at the expense of Mexican and Indigenous heritage, came into common usage in response to the white supremacist logics and practices that accompanied US American colonization.[34] Anselmo Arellano has shown that Las Gorras Blancas were one component of a movement known as "*El Movimiento del Pueblo*", or the "People's Movement," that arose in response to land enclosures in the 1880s and 1890s and grew to include "all the settlements which fell within the boundaries of the Las Vegas Land Grant."[35] Much political organizing for this popular uprising took place in the *moradas,* or churches, of the Penitentes, to whom most residents of the grant would have belonged. To suggest otherwise is, at best, to ignorant of the historical record, and, at worst, to attempt to reassign blame for the violence of the period from those with power to those who responded to power being violently exercised on them. This is the kind of forgetting, or erasure, the intervention into *Ojito del Caballo*'s origins seeks to counteract, done in the spirit of Alessandro Portelli's work *The Order Has Been Carried Out*: "[i]n our world, also, when an anti-fascist is silent, a piece of liberty is burned."[36]

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[31] Frisch, 13.

[32] P. Scherer, "City will not allow county-funded museum exhibit," *Las Vegas Optic*, January 27, 2022. https://www.lasvegasoptic.com/news/community/city-will-not-allow-county-funded-museum-exhibit/article_7bec86fa-7f99-11ec-a84f-271751fa7853.html

[33] See also: David Correia, "'Retribution Will Be Their Reward': New Mexico's Las Gorras Blancas and the Fight for the Las Vegas Land Grant Commons." *Radical History Review* 108, (2010): 49–72, doi: 10.1215/01636545-2010-003, Mary Romero, "Class Struggle and Resistance against the Transformation of Land Ownership and Usage

Before continuing the story of *Ojito del Caballo*'s origins, a note on violence. The material violence produced by the processes of accumulation heralded and justified by Manifest

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in Northern New Mexico: The Case of *Las Gorras Blancas*." *Chicana/o Latina/o Law Review* 26, no. 1 (2006), doi: 10.5070/C7261021167, and Robert J Rosenbaum, *Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest: "the Sacred Right of Self-Preservation"* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

[34] Gonzales-Berry and Maciel, 7.

[35] Anselmo Arellano, "Through Thick and Thin: Evolutionary Transitions of Las Vegas Grandes and its Pobladores" (PhD dissertation, University of New Mexico, 1990), 302.

[36] Alessandro Portelli. *The Order Has Been Carried Out: History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 19.

Destiny was immense – from the genocide of Indigenous inhabitants of the region prior to the rate of enclosures reaching their peak, to the dispossession and displacement of those living on land grants, to the racism and discrimination of white supremacist ideology. These processes – of layered colonization, settlement, and displacement – were saturated with violence.[37] Under Spanish rule, the trade in Indigenous slaves and captives was key to servicing the mines of northern Mexico, to forcing southern Indigenous peoples to migrate northwards to populate the buffer zones of empire of which Nuevomexico was one, and to making possible the settlement of further frontier communities in the region through trade with surrounding Indigenous communities.[38] Land grant communities, often settled by the descendants of enslaved or stolen Indigenous peoples, were themselves premised on this violence. Community land grants, whether under Spain, Mexico or the United States, were constituted in violent colonial contexts, even if those who settled them were "colonial subjects in ways similar to the Utes and Apaches they displaced."[39] In the case of Las Vegas, this also included the Navajo, Commanche and Kiowa peoples, with whom the community land grant settlers were in near-constant conflict[40] prior to and after the US invasion, until the genocidal American Indian Wars subdued these Indigenous populations and forced them onto reservations. This violence is part of the story of *Ojito del Caballo*, and must be at the fore of the truncated, but hopefully concise, *longue durée* summary of capitalist world ecology[41] that follows. This summary places Spanish and then American colonization in the history of capitalism creating and then devouring "cheap natures"[42] and will then examine the particularities of the processes of accumulation and enclosure in San Miguel County in territorial New Mexico in the late nineteenth century as navigated by Joce and Barbarita.

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[37] Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 5.

[38] Blackhawk, 47.

[39] Correia, 8. Correia is here writing about the Tierra Amarilla land grant, but the same applies to the Las Vegas land grant.

[40] Arellano, 180.

[41] Jason W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital*. (New York: Verso, 2015), 158.

[42] Patel and Moore, 18.

The specific mechanisms of capitalist accumulation and enclosure in late nineteenth-century New Mexico that Joce and Barbarita encountered and reacted to are essential to illuminate in order to flesh out the origins, and then repetition, of their family's struggle against capitalist modernity's material violence and equally violent real abstractions: the linearity of time, the flatness of space, and the making-nature-external.[43] Here capitalism is understood as an ecology of expansion through frontiers, where frontiers are "encounter zones between capital and all kinds of nature"[44] premised on the above real abstractions. These "real abstractions aren't innocent: they reflect the interests of the powerful and license them to organize the world."[45] In other words, Joce and Barbarita moved onto *Ojito del Caballo* while New Mexico, a US territory until 1912, was being made into a frontier. Their move was thus both a reaction to and a result of accumulation and enclosure happening all around them.

Spanish colonization of the region today known as New Mexico dates to the late sixteenth century with the exception of the twenty-year expulsion of Spanish colonizers after the 1680 pueblo revolt. Spanish recolonization of the region in the late seventeenth century was then deemed necessary in order to protect the valuable silver mines in northern Mexico.[46] The region was a borderland of Spanish empire and most of New Mexico's geography remained under the control of powerful Indigenous nations. Outside of the Rio Grande corridor, where larger Spanish settlements such as the territorial capital of Santa Fe were established, the Spanish developed a system of land tenure, the community land grant system, based on an "amalgamation of Pueblo and Spanish village land-tenure and social patterns"[47] whose purpose was to create "human shields"[48] for both the Rio Grande corridor and the mines of northern Mexico. These community land grants relied on common ownership of most of the grant land. Anyone living on the grant had access to the Commons, subject to participation in a set of communal obligations such as *acequia*, or irrigation ditch, maintenance. The community land grant system was expanded after Mexican independence from Spain in 1821 as the government sought to create additional buffers between itself and its expansionary neighbor to the north, and in 1835 a group of twenty-five families from the San Miguel del Bado grant petitioned the territorial governor of Nuevomexico for a community grant on the meadows – *las vegas* – surrounding the Gallinas River.

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[43] Patel and Moore, 39.

[44] Ibid., 18

[45] Patel and Moore, 47.

[46] Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and Simon J. Ortiz, *Roots of Resistance: A History of Land Tenure in New Mexico*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 13.

By 1838 thirty families lived permanently on the grant, which the previously established Santa Fe trail ran through, and were in the process of establishing what would become the city of Las Vegas.[49] Just over a decade later the United States invaded Mexico, the first action of which took place on August 15, 1846 when General Kearney led the Army of the West onto the Las Vegas plaza and declared the town and territory to be under the jurisdiction of the United States. Overnight the community went from being on the northeastern frontier of Mexico to being on the southwestern frontier of the United States' expansionary project. Following two years of war, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed in 1848, bequeathing the United States close to half of Mexico's territory. The treaty included clauses ensuring existing Mexican property claims, but as Rodolfo Acuña has noted "[i]t is one thing to make a treaty and another to live up to it."[50]

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[47] Dunbar-Ortiz, 14.
[48] Correia, 1.
[49] Arellano, 14.

Under Spanish and then Mexican rule, land in New Mexico was not a commodity. Land tenure on the community land grants was rather characterized by cooperative approaches to managing and living collectively.[51] This changed with US conquest when "land became the most important exchange commodity for the primitive accumulation of capital".[52] Because of the clauses in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo guaranteeing existing Mexican property claims, New Mexico was, in some ways, a difficult place for this kind of accumulation to occur because so much of the territory had already been legally granted to land grant communities, whose title to the land should have been protected by the treaty. With the arrival of United States and onslaught of capitalism and its social relations, private interests sought to secure title to land as a form of speculative investment, while other state actors sought to abolish common property relations through small-scale settlement and agriculture.[53] David Correia has argued that this struggle between different powerful actors – on the one hand land-grabbers such as Thomas Catron and the Sante Fe Ring who sought quick profits through gaining title to large portions of community land grants followed by speculation on those titles, on the other territorial officials such as surveyor general George Julian who sought to prioritize small-scale private plots to encourage settlement – played a large role in shaping the struggle over land in late nineteenth- century New Mexico. Both groups sought to commodify land and end common property relations,[54] which land grant communities resisted with all the means at their disposal.

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[50] Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation,* (New York: Canfield Press, 1972), 30.

[51] Dunbar-Ortiz, 5.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Correia, 34.

Speculation and enclosure in territorial New Mexico began in earnest the 1870s, though the seeds of these processes were sowed well before – first with US mercantile capital arriving on the Santa Fe trail beginning in the 1820s[55] and then after 1848 with the arrival of lawyers and traders who "were quick to note that under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, there was a rich environment that produced vast wealth for them by securing title to the land grants."[56] After the US invasion, Las Vegas became the county seat of San Miguel County, which rapidly became the most populous in the state and then the center of trade in territorial New Mexico.[57] By the time the Abeyta family settled on *Ojito del Caballo*, the speculation and enclosure that transformed "New Mexico's land grant communities from remote agrarian outposts into critical nodes in the circuits of global capital"[58] were in full swing. The voraciousness of the enclosures brought about by this speculation cannot be overstated. By the 1890s, wealthy outsiders and speculators, as well as the local *ricos*, had accumulated hundreds of thousands of acres of community land grants across the territory, with "poor Hispano families"[59] being those primarily dispossessed in the process. This was as true of the Las Vegas land grant as anywhere else. The arrival of the railroad in the summer 1879 dramatically accelerated the processes of speculation and enclosure across the state and in San Miguel County, and in Las Vegas also meant the bifurcation of the community – along class, racial, and linguistic lines – into two separate cities which were not consolidated until 1970. The railroad arrived "as though chased into the territory by a stampede of finance capital"[60] and brought with it technologies of enclosure for the purposes of resource extraction and commercial cattle production, such as barbed wire.

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[54] Correia, 60.
[55] Dunbar-Ortiz, 7.
[56] Arellano, 298.
[57] Ibid., 187.
[58] Correia, 29.
[59] Arellano, 296, 302.

Wealthy merchants and speculators, such as Thomas Catron, employed "an army of agents and attorneys all working together"[61] to exploit the legal system in order to gain title to as much land grant land as possible.[62] Fences and large ranching and forestry operations that enclosed tens of thousands of acres suddenly started appearing all over the Las Vegas land grant on what was supposed to be the commons, while resistance grew and then boiled over with movements such as *El Movimiento del Pueblo* and *Las Gorras Blancas*. These organized resistance movements became powerful enough[63] that they drew the attention of the US Congress, which in 1891 created the United States Court of Private Land Claims in order to adjudicate the contradictory ownership claims resulting from the catastrophic effects of speculation over land. This is the kind of turmoil and uncertainty that would have surrounded the Abeyta family in the 1870s and 1880s – turmoil and uncertainty that they responded to in order to secure their livelihoods through gaining title to land that was rapidly being enclosed before their eyes.

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[60] Correia, 55.

[61] Ibid., 52.

[62] See also María E. Montoya, *Translating Property: The Maxwell Land Grant and the Conflict Over Land in the American West, 1840-1900*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

[63] Arellano, 326.

Prior to moving to the ranch in 1883, Joce and Barbarita's family lived in a small village a few miles north of the city of Las Vegas on the Las Vegas land grant. Leticia Padilla inherited a copy of the family's original deed for *Ojito del Caballo* from her *tia* Antonia, who was, until her death, one of the co-owners of the ranch after her mother died in the 1980s. The deed is in the name of Joce Abetyia and it[64] refers to an act of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of New Mexico passed in February 1878 as the legal backing for the land claim. This document, entitled "An act with respect to the rights of possession of real estate, and for other purposes"[65] allowed for the settlement of up to 320 acres of public domain land in the US Territory of New Mexico for the purposes of agriculture or stock raising. The term 'public domain' is key here because under Mexican property law, to which the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was supposed to adhere, the Las Vegas Land Grant was not part of the public domain – it was commonly-held land that belonged to those who lived on the Las Vegas land grant. This territorial act is representative of the position of US state actors, such as the previously mentioned surveyor general George Julian, whose aim was to commodify land and therefore abolish community property relations, but who also believed that the rampant activities of speculators were an impediment to development.[66] The act encouraged the "improvement" of land through farming and building and stipulated that those who claimed land could not vacate it for more than six months at a time or else they would be forced to forfeit their claim. The Abeyta family deed describes 320 acres known as *el Ojito del Caballo. Ojito* translates, in English, to spring and

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[64]New Mexico, (as cited in Leticia Padilla "Ojo del Caballo Property History 1883-2006, Ranch Documentation, Pictures, Maps, Translations, Self-published, 2006), "Aviso de posesión de Propriedad Raiz," Leticia Padilla's personal collection.

[65] New Mexico, (1878), *Acts of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of New Mexico, twenty-third session: Convened at the Capital at the city of Santa Fe, on Monday the 7th day of January, 1878, and adjourned on Friday the 15th day of February, 1878,* Samuel Ellison, Translator (Santa Fe, N.M. Manderfield & Tucker, Public Printers), HathiTrust, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.35112204573267, 55.

[66] Correia, 60.

caballo to horse. The spring after which the land was named is important. Part of the reason that land grant communities in New Mexico were targeted for privatization and speculation was because these communities occupied much of the land in New Mexico with ready access to water – a scarce resource throughout most of the state.[67] This made any land adjacent to water, almost entirely in the form of rivers and streams, sought after by investors seeking "free"[68] grazing for cattle production. It was often also the first land to be claimed and enclosed by speculators. For the Abeya family, securing access to a source of water would have been as important as securing access to land on which to grow and raise food.

With the explosion of development, speculation and enclosure that followed the arrival of the railroad in Las Vegas in 1879, Joce and Barbarita would have been witnesses to the rabid and rapid changes to land tenure taking place around them. They lived just outside a small town that ballooned into the most important trade hub in the state in the decade after the arrival of the railroad and which brought immense wealth to a few along with myriad forms of violence to the many. The Abeytas moved onto their land at a time of immense churning and uncertainty when struggle on and over land was the backdrop to life. Land once available to them as a communal resource was disappearing behind fences and appearing on maps with grids. They were members of a class "whose limited economic means did not allow for litigation in the courts."[69] Joce and Barbarita would have faced the imposition of a new and foreign language, the introduction of a money economy and money taxes that frequently dispossessed agricultural producers,[70] the navigation of a new legal system and its bureaucracies that favoured those with money and power, and fast-changing new laws. Despite the myriad obstacles in their path, they secured title to land to live on and farm.

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[67] Blackshear, James Bailey. *Honor and Defiance: A History of the Las Vegas Land Grant in New Mexico*, (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Sunstone Press, 2013), 91.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Arellano, 302.
[70] Dunbar-Ortiz, 8.

There are a few more clues in the historical record that suggest possible factors in Joce and Barbarita's securing of this land. For instance, Jesuit priests who had installed themselves in Las Vegas after the US occupation warned the Spanish-speaking inhabitants of the grant in newspapers and in their own church publications of the necessity of obtaining legal title to land in order to protect themselves against the coming storm of enclosure prior to the arrival of the railroad in 1879.[71] Did Joce and Barbarita read these proclamations, or hear about them from others? They were practicing Catholics as well as members of the local *morada* – the gathering places of the *Penitente* religious orders that became hubs for political organizing and resistance[72] alongside their religious function with the arrival of the forces of accumulation. It is plausible, if never certain, that Joce and Barbarita heard about the act passed in the 1878 territorial assembly through this community and then acted accordingly to secure the means of their survival – access to land to grow food and raise goats as well as access to water. As previously mentioned, the terms of this act clearly stipulated the requirement that the claimants live on and farm the land they claimed or else forfeit it, all of which the family did.

This section is intended as an answer to the question 'what produced the necessity for struggle?' or 'what has the family struggled against?' These are questions I asked at the beginning of my research, and I chose to frame my answer by excavating *Ojito del Caballo*'s origins. The fact of recurring struggle – of the land nearly have been lost so many times – puzzled me, and I sought an explanation outside of single causal answers such as property law, poverty, or racism, though of course all of these are important factors. The answer I have given above, in short, is that the Abeyta family's struggle to keep their land has always been against the totality produced by capitalist accumulation and social relations, in part because *Ojito del Caballo* was created as a result of the arrival of these forces – because of the *chronotone* brought forth along newly set railroad lines. Capitalist social relations, as well as waves of enclosure and accumulation, have both metastasized and contorted over time, producing the need for recurring, and innovative, struggle. It seemed, and still seems, important to provide an explanation for the family's struggles in order to demonstrate contingencies: both of the historically specific conditions that threatened the Abeyta family as well as their response to those conditions. Joce's acquisition of title to the land he and Barbarita moved into with their children was not inevitable, but instead an act that could only have come as a result of a calculated response to the political landscape of their moment. The particulars of their decision-making process are lost to the past, but what is certain is that gaining title to land while navigating the catastrophe of enclosure and speculation in late nineteenth-century New Mexico would never have been easy. The deck was stacked against them, but their steadfastness in struggle was the essential precondition to securing land to live on. Joce and Barbarita's descendants inherited both *Ojito del Caballo* and the struggle over land made necessary by capitalist social relations and the imperative of accumulation.

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[71] Arellano, 251.
[72] Blackshear, 136.

Chronotones* on *Ojito del Caballo

Every generation of the Abeyta family since Joce and Barbarita has had to deal with at least one instance of the land nearly-having-been lost. These *chronotones* will be briefly elaborated on below. *Ojito del Caballo* came into being with the arrival of the full force of capitalist modernity, its social relations, imperatives for accumulation, and its real abstractions. The material violence of Spanish and then US American empire briefly outlined above was eventually accompanied by "a deep violence to subjective experience"[73] produced by the real abstractions buttressing capitalism's expansion. John Berger argues that this violence, sometimes gradually and sometimes abruptly, ruptures the relationship between people and that which is timeless, or to the dead who surround the living.[74] It is the violence of the real abstraction of the linearity of time in the service of progress that removes the potential to connect with that which is outside time. It is in this way that I am employing 'continuity' – as the maintenance of the family's proximity to their past and future. "And yet people are never only the passive objects of history. […] popular ingenuity […] uses whatever little there is at hand, to preserve experience, to recreate an area of "timelessness", to insist upon the permanent."[75] For the Abeyta family, this insistence upon the permanent manifests itself most prominently in their oral histories through expressions of the relationship between family life and *Ojito del Caballo*. Family-on-the-land becomes a thread that connects past with present and present with future beyond the scope of a single lifetime. The insistence on the permanent is not a permanence of the self or individual – a solidified and grasping permanence – but a permanence of the timeless that recognizes the ephemerality of a single life within the continuity outside of that life. Below, Shirley Hernandez describes *Ojito del Caballo* as something to be carried by her children much in the same way a baton or a family photograph or heirloom is passed on because of their potential to remind people of a shared experience that transcends any one person. The land connects them with the past and with the unknown future, and it carries the potential "to build better, bigger, connections" within the family.

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[73] Berger, *Another Way of Telling,* 107.
[74] Berger, *Hold Everything Dear,* 9.
[75] Berger, *Another Way of Telling,* 108.

> (Shirley) "I know that my kids are going to carry this. They have an investment in this land just like I did, and just like my ancestors had: they feel connected. My daughter comes here and she loves the quiet, she loves the peace, it grounds her, it keeps her centred... and obviously my middle son is moving here because he wants to feel centred. So that brings me joy. I hope that my nieces, I hope that my brother's kids can feel the same way. I hope that my cousin's kids can feel that same way. And I hope that as they move forward, that they remember the dramas that have happened... and obviously not to repeat them, to use those stepping stones to continue to build better, bigger, connections with each other."

The primary nonsynchronous temporality is that which is articulated by Shirley Hernandez above: a temporality of connectedness. It is therefore possible to understand the recurrence of struggle on *Ojito del Caballo* as latent within the relationship between the unilinear temporality of capital and other temporalities that were employed in moments of crisis to protect the continuity of the family and the land. The sequence of *chronotones* that follows is not exhaustive, but it includes many of the most difficult moments in *Ojito del Caballo*'s history that the family have had to overcome. The first resulted from the readjudication of the Las Vegas Land Grant in the early twentieth century, which Leticia Padilla's great-grandmother had to resolve alone after the death of her husband:

> (Leticia) "Grandma Barbarita saved the land before her because she was going down to the Las Vegas Land Grant committee and fighting for her land. Because it seemed like 'well you don't have a husband anymore... and you only have one son.' And so also she had to fight for her easements, and to make sure there wasn't any encroachment on her land, and so that grandma saved the ranch way back then."

Following the chaos of speculation and enclosure in the late nineteenth century, the US Supreme Court ruled in 1902 that the Las Vegas Land Grant belonged to the Town of Las Vegas and that all residents, whether descendants of the original grantees or more recent occupants, were legal holders of the land.[76] A struggle over how this decision would be interpreted and managed ensued. Ultimately, a special law was passed in the territorial legislature that would ensure most of the people living on the grant did not retain control over the land. This special law allowed for a board of trustees to be appointed to oversee the grant by a territorial supreme court justice[77] rather than by popular vote. The board of trustees was empowered to issue new titles to land as well as to lease, mortgage or sell any parts of the grant at its discretion after it received the patent for the Las Vegas land grant from the US Congress.[78] The result was the almost total privatization of the land grant, including the sale of huge tracts of land – some as large as 50,000 acres[79] – to outside investors. In 1903, after the board had already made a few such large sales which resulted in popular unrest, it agreed to issue deeds to families who had been living on parcels of land of up to 160 acres for at least a decade. These families would have to submit proof of their claims to be evaluated by the board. Joce Abeyta died in 1904. His name appears on tax receipts for *Ojito del Caballo* until then, after which Barbarita Ortiz de Abeyta's name starts to appear on the receipts. In 1909, Barbarita presented claim #252 to the Las Vegas Land Grant Committee which included her own affidavit as well as those she had collected from her neighbors.[80] These affidavits outlined how the Abeyta family had adhered to the terms of their original 1883 deed: they had lived continuously on the property, they had farmed and raised animals, they had built a house and then enlarged that house, and they had paid their taxes throughout. Her claim, as well as the resolution of property line disputes with her immediate neighbors, was approved in 1910 and she was issued a new deed.

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[76] Arellano, 339.
[77] Arellano, 341.
[78] Ibid., 347.
[79] Ibid., 353.
[80] Las Vegas Land Grant Board of Trustees, (as cited in Leticia Padilla "Ojo del Caballo Property History 1883-2006, Ranch Documentation, Pictures, Maps, Translations, Self-published, 2006), "Las Vegas Land Grant Committee Minutes for claim #252, June 25, 1909," Leticia Padilla's personal collection.

The next heir to *Ojito del Caballo* was Felipe Abeyta, who inherited the property upon the death of his mother Barbarita in 1914. He lived there until his sudden death in 1937 whereupon his wife Laura Abeyta, née Martinez, inherited the land. Felipe's death was one of the precipitating elements of the next *chronotone*, when the family lost title to the land to the State of New Mexico Land Commission because of unpaid taxes in 1940. Laura was able to negotiate a repurchase contract later in the same year, and after five years of payments regained title to the land in 1945, here remembered by Shirley:

> (Shirley) "My great-grandmother didn't read or write. She signed with an 'X'. And her sons got taken to war, right? My *tio* Chalelo - he was disabled so he obviously couldn't help her with that. And my grandfather was too young to help with any of that stuff. So it was her three oldest sons - the ones that should have been here taking care of the ranch after their father died to help take care of the taxes and stuff - you know, they got taken to war. And so she didn't understand tax bills when they came in."

Laura Abeyta was Shirley Hernandez's great-grandmother. Shirley Hernandez's above recollection came from a part of the interview where we discussed the complexity of property law, and in particular how it is a source of confusion, misunderstanding and disagreement even for those with nuanced knowledge of the law. This particular recollection makes a clash of temporalities clear, where the law buttressing capitalist property relations always contains the potential for *chronotones*. Property taxes, and property law in general, are imposed constants that do not take the conditions of life or social reproduction into consideration. Laura Abeyta was newly-widowed with eleven mouths to feed, hundreds of goats to manage and food to grow, all in the context of the aftermath of the Great Depression. She also did not speak or read English, but two years of missed tax payments resulted in the confiscation of the land by the state land commission. Laura Abeyta was also the owner of the ranch when the next *chronotone* erupted, although on this occasion it was one of her daughters who stepped in to ensure that the land remained in the family. The trouble started when a company who came to offer money in exchange for a lease of the mineral rights to *Ojito del Caballo*:

> (Leticia) "…they told her that for five hundred dollars, and we have that documentation too, that for five hundred dollars she would sell all her minerals for ninety-nine years or something, for five hundred dollars. And she had the check there. And five hundred dollars to my grandmother, and probably to my *tio* Nick and them, was like a lot of money. But my *tia* Cecilia said 'no we're not going to sell anybody anything. It's gonna stay.' So she went and she saw an attorney friend that they had - his name was Tiny Martinez. And he said 'did she cash the check?' and she said 'no, here's the check' and he said 'you know, let me take care of this.' And he was kind of like a cousin or good friend of the family's. And he went and he got that contract null and void. She hadn't signed anything yet, good thing, but she had the check in hand, right? Never cashed it - that would have been… considered that she was ok with it. But she didn't sign it, she showed it to *tia* Cecilia and so *tia* Cecilia, I think, at the point saved the ranch from it being the way it is now."

Who stepped in to prevent the sale of mineral rights to an outside interest is as important in Leticia's above recollection as the fact of the sale having been voided. The central role of Abeyta women in the struggle to overcome *chronotones* is explored in Chapter Two. For now, Leticia's recollection once again points to a clash of temporalities where the capitalist imperative of accumulation, undergirded by a linear temporality, produces the need for struggle. Under property law in the United States, land becomes a bundle of rights that can be separated and sold. In practice, the sale of *Ojito del Caballo*'s mineral rights could have resulted in the destruction of the surface of the land where the family lived. This is also another example of capitalism's need to create "cheap natures" where the imperative to secure inputs at no or little cost is placed ahead of all other relationships, such as between land, family and life.

Property law was also at the center of the cascading effects of the next *chronotone* on the ranch. After the death of Laura Abeyta in 1983, who was the sole owner of the ranch after the death of her husband in the 1930s, her surviving children agreed to a joint tenancy deed where they each owned equal shares in *Ojito del Caballo*, but where no one person could sell their interest without the consent of the others. In a joint tenancy deed, the death of one of the joint tenants results in the evaporation of their interest so that the ownership of the property eventually goes to the last living person on the joint tenancy deed. A legal dispute arose after the death of one of the joint tenant owners of the ranch. This joint tenant, who will here remain unnamed, wrote a deed for their share of the joint tenancy deed to *Ojito del Caballo*, giving it to their children. When this person died, their children sued the existing owners – the remaining joint tenants who inherited the land from Laura Abeyta – for the share deeded to them. Shirley Hernandez is a cousin to these members of the family who sued the existing owners. She remembers the ownership dispute as a tragedy aggravated by the actions, and perhaps mere presence, of lawyers:

> (Shirley) "Everybody just threw lawyers at it. And look what the lawyers did, right? They caused a rift in the family because the lawyers didn't describe or explain to them - that attorney that they[81] got from Taos? She knew. She knew. She said 'yes that's, the correct signature. Yes that contract says they're taking it as joint tenants. Yes they accepted it as joint tenants the next month.' Well what are you confused about then, sweetheart?! What do we have to reveal? Because you just finished saying that they don't own anything but you still want to fight about it. And all that did was add fuel to their fire. 'Well the lawyer says, the lawyer says...' I'm like 'that lawyer's an idiot, and you're gonna lose, and you're gonna spend more money giving to her than you guys are ever going to get back.' And they don't have that kind of money either, right? That lawyer kept asking them for more..."

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[81] The members of the Abeyta family who were suing the existing owners.

Ultimately the court decided in favour of the living joint tenant owners – Jose "Junior" Abeyta, Cecilia Peña, and Antonia Maes. The court ruled that above-mentioned deed was not valid as it had only been signed by one of the existing joint tenants, when it would have taken all of their signatures to deed a section, or all, of *Ojito del Caballo.* But this was only after a nearly twenty-year intra-family court dispute over ownership of *Ojito del Caballo* that cost tens of thousands of dollars and created a painful fissure in the family. In Shirley's above explanation, lawyers are akin to vehicles for the synchronizing temporality of capital. These dark angels (or perhaps vampires is a better description) of linear time are the agents by which the land – with all of its memories and stories and webs of family relations and other-than-human relations – is rendered a valuable commodity. Implicit in Shirley's memory that "everybody just threw lawyers at it" is that lawyers made the situation more complicated and difficult, not less so, and perhaps also that the invocation of the law made the conflict more entrenched. Indeed, Shirley's cousin Diana Padilla recalls the ownership dispute as a process that had ramifications far beyond the boundaries of *Ojito del Caballo*.

> (Diana) "My grandfather and my aunts are still alive and they're having troubles with other family about the ranch. I don't really understand it 'cause I'm just a kid. I'm just like 'yeah mom that's messed up how could they be like that?' Because it went against the grain of how we were raised. You respect your elders to the upmost: you never betray them, you always honour them. Obviously with limits - if your elder was inappropriate they would take care of that. I mean you just didn't disrespect your elders. So to hear that they had people disrespecting them was like (gasps) 'oohhh what does that mean? What does that mean about our moral structure as a family?' It started to dissipate. And then you start to see – we're not inviting those people no more. They're not coming to the graduations and the baby showers and the weddings and the birthday parties. They're not invited anymore. So you watch that happen and you get a little bit afraid. 'Cause you're like 'what does this mean for our family?' What does it look like? And then, you know, you wonder is it going start to deteriorate the rest - the others, you know, like my aunts and uncles and my mom and her brothers and sisters. You think 'is that going to happen to them too?'"

Diana’s memory of the ownership dispute centers on what the conflict meant for the cohesion of the extended Abeyta family. The reverberations of this *chronotone* threatened much more than loss of land, resources, or money. It threatened the safety of the web of family relations and produced absences and divisions within that web that Diana was afraid might expand. It brought into question the very “moral structure” of the family such that, for Diana, the family’s future as a family was suddenly uncertain. While the precipitating factor in the eruption of this *chronotone* was the writing of a dodgy deed, it is important that the story not be reduced to decisions made by individuals in the Abeyta family. Rather, it should be taken as proof of David Correia’s assertion that “violence is inherent to property and law”[82] and that “while the law can be said to mediate conflicts, it can also produce the conditions for those conflicts.”[83] In this case, Laura Abeyta’s children made what seemed like a commonsense decision at the time of their inheritance of *Ojito del Caballo*: they signed a contract that made them equal owners of the land. But contained within that decision – within that interaction with the law – was always the potential for conflict, even disaster. One of the consequences of this contract was that, unless all of the owners agreed otherwise, the land would pass to the last living person who signed the contract. In a family as large as the Abeyta family, this meant that the vast majority of Abeyta descendants would no longer have any kind of legal claim to the land. The narrowness of property law, especially in its instantiation under capitalism, thus contains within it the potential for *chronotones.* Joseph Abeyta and Diana Padilla are cousins of almost the same age. Like Diana, Joseph recalls how the conflict over ownership made visible to him the contradictions in how he learned to think about the ranch and how it was conceptualized under the law:

> (Joseph) “So you start realizing 'ok it belongs to them three.' And then when all that stuff came to pass and I was already getting older, you realize ok well it's willed, but who's it

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[82] Correia, 9.
[83] Ibid., 11.

> willed to? Who's going to be the next owner of this ranch? Is it going to follow down the line? What's going to happen? And then you find out that it's willed to Junior's kids. My two *tias* - in their wills - wrote it off to Junior's kids. Well like you say: Junior had a lot of kids. My dad's one of eleven. Who's going to be involved in this? Who's this going to belong to? Like am I even going to be allowed to come up here anymore? You start thinking of it like that. Which sounds crazy but as a kid you're like 'well I don't want to get locked out of this ranch, I grew up here.' I used to drive a golf cart up and down this little street here. Me and my brother used to hang off that arroyo, off that tree with the rope there. You know you start to thinking 'I don't want to not be able to come here.' And as you get older and you listen more - like ok it's going to go to this one and this one and this one, my *tio* passed away, and then another *tio* passed away and I've lost a lot of family before this thing even broke apart. So it kind of narrows the playing field. Needless to say. But I do think about it sometimes. Like is that fair? Is that fair to my cousin TJ? Is that fair to my cousin Jocey? Is that fair to all my other cousins - that family that has either passed away, or wrote themselves off? My *tia* Velma didn't want nothing to do with this, she wrote herself out right away. She didn't want a hand in it. But I'm like 'was that fair to my cousin Manuel?' My cousin Manuel, my cousin Flavio, these are the ones that I grew up with that are my age. Well, it's not their ranch no more because they're not part of the few. And it keeps breaking down and breaking down to like 'ok well who's left? Like who, who owns this property anymore?' And it's hard to think of it like that."

It is important that this *chronotone* – on the surface the result of part of the family suing another part of the family – not be reduced to the decisions of individuals involved. That is a factor, but as Joseph demonstrates above, the larger question is of fairness and of how property law is foremost a site of exclusion. This becomes immediately apparent in the context of a large, complex and contradictory – read human – family and their webs of relations. Joseph does not bring up the financial value of the land. Rather what he does not want to lose are sites of memory: the hill he learned to drive on in a golf cart and the arroyo he played in with his brother. He reflects on how, at the stroke of a pen, the cousins he grew up playing with on the ranch were cut out of ownership and therefore potentially from accessing the land because of the arbitrariness of inheritance and the way property law dictates the terms of that inheritance. This was the case for the cousins who were given an unlawful deed and who sued the living joint tenant owners. Because their parent was not the last surviving joint tenant, their legal ties were severed. Joseph also alludes to the ranch “breaking down”, by which he means what happened when Leticia Padilla, Victor Abeyta, Theresa Hernandez, Gilbert Abeyta, Ralph Abeyta, Gloria Abeyta and Leroy Abeyta inherited *Ojito del Caballo* upon the passing of the last joint tenant owner, Cecila Peña. The new owners then made the difficult decision to subdivide the ranch, the reasoning for which Leticia describes below.

> (Leticia) “…the transfer upon death deed was to all of us, right? And so we were really happy about that. We never really thought about dividing the land. But then what happened is that we said 'you know what? We don't know what life is going to bring.’ And we were all thinking, at the time, that we want the land for our kids, you know. And their kids and all the other kids. In our minds we're all one family, so that's how we were thinking. But as time went on and we would have our meetings - me and my brothers and sisters - we started realizing that our children were not thinking the way we think. The way us - as brothers and sisters - thought about the land. Their ideas were to bring in businesses, you know, and things like that. And then we realized that that would probably create a lot of havoc within the family that could maybe be made less by actually dividing the land.”

When Leticia and her siblings inherited the land, they had just been through two decades of court procedures, meetings with lawyers, research, and confrontations between family members, all of which produced difficult emotions, uncertainty, and financial burdens for those involved. Ten years into the dispute, Leticia was diagnosed with cancer – twice. She attributes her illness to the stress of being the primary organizer for all things legal and logistical. Leticia’s recollection of the decision-making to divide up the land involves the future, and specifically the children of the future. The *chronotone* that they had just been through was damaging to the family and Leticia and her siblings needed to find a way to prevent the same kind of damage happening again. They were, in other words, foreseeing future *chronotones* produced by conflicting visions of the future, and time. When they inherited the land in 2015, they began the process of dividing *Ojito del Caballo* into sections. But no sooner had one *chronotone* been overcome, another presented itself when the family’s lawyer threatened to foreclose *Ojito del*

Caballo unless the complete bill was paid. Theresa and Shirley Hernandez – mother and daughter – remember this episode here:

> (Theresa) "…it was like a gang war. So we spent a lot of money to save this land. And it was Letty that started it, but of course I put my share of money into it. And at the end the attorney was going to put a lean on the property because she was only getting a hundred dollars and we owed her over twenty-one thousand. That's when my daughter stepped in."[84]
>
> (Shirley) "And it wasn't until then, which is about probably ten or twelve years ago, that I really started to grasp the value of what was happening here. And understand how many people had screwed my family over, and they were doing it blatantly. Like 'so what, what are you going to do?' Because our family is dirt rich but cash poor. Nobody has money to pay these assholes to do the work that needed to be done and I was getting really, really angry about it. And that lawyer, may she rest in peace, she's passed away. I honestly think she's lucky that she passed away because I think there would have been a lot of claims against her for her inappropriate and unethical ways of acquiring land. She kept telling my family 'it's ok, it's ok pay whenever you can.' And they would pay a hundred here, a hundred there. And she kept track of it. But she was waiting all along for the case to be finished. And then she was going to put a lean on the property for lack of payment. And that just really, really pissed us off. But for me - I mean I understood the connection to, you know, my heritage. I knew my great-grandfather had been here, I knew my mom was born here, I knew all that kind of stuff. But I didn't understand how much it meant to me until somebody was trying to take it away from us."

This scenario is reminiscent of the enclosures that took place on the Las Vegas Land Grant in the late nineteenth century when lawyers and surveyors took land as payment for services rendered from people who had no access to cash – and sometimes no knowledge that they had become someone's client. The Abeyta family owed their lawyer and surveyor over twenty-thousand dollars, and were given four months to come up with the money. After twenty years of legal fights and uncertainty, they were on the brink of losing everything they had struggled for. Shirley Hernandez then stepped in and offered to pay a thousand dollars an acre, considerably more than the land was worth at the time, for a twenty-one-acre parcel of *Ojito del*

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[84] Theresa Hernandez, Interviewed by Gabriel Ellison-Scowcroft, Las Vegas, New Mexico, January 18, 2022.

Caballo. The lawyer and surveyor were paid off and the land was subdivided. But once again, this *chronotone* arose because of the latent potential within property law.

In his famous essay philosophy of history, Walter Benjamin depicts the past as being necessarily incomplete.[85] The past contains an almost infinite number of pathways that, for one reason or another, have been blocked or stymied. The past is incomplete because these blockages are never permanent. They can be removed, and the projects from the past can be brought into the present. "Events need to be thought simultaneously in a historical and in a non-historical way: historical, because they belong to the past; non-historical, because they leap out of the past as a possible future."[86] The Abeyta family's commitment to overcoming *chronotones* can be thought through this prism of reactivation. The singularly plastic threat posed by the temporality of capital has been met again and again in the name of family, memory and the future. The memory of those who lived in the past, the will of those who live in the present, and those children of the future towards whom the fruits of struggle will hopefully benefit have provided the strength to meet each *chronotone* as it has arisen.

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[85] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, (New York: First Mariner Books, 2019), 197.

[86] Massimiliano Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities*, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), XI.

Chapter 2

"A Time To Cry, A Time To Laugh, A Time To Live, And Then We Die"

> *(Joseph) "There's very few people that still have ranches that are this old and have survived the test of time for this long. Even though ours is broken down into sections and it has undergone - I don't want to say scrutiny, but has had a lot of obstacles to deal with. My family with this name – which is crazy because these are the last Abeytas [gestures towards his two sons in the room] that'll probably own the ranch, these boys right here. They carry that name that can be read back to the 1800s... it's just... unheard of these days, it's unheard of."*

Introduction

Stories and memories about work, broadly defined, are the particular focus of this chapter. First, this is in order to address the historically gendered nature of struggle on the ranch, and second to explore a way of being on the land that is a recurrent theme in the oral histories. Above, Joseph Abeyta describes the family's achievement – to not have lost *Ojito del Caballo* – as "unheard of". As we have already seen, this achievement came because of a continued willingness to struggle. What is missing from the story thus far is which members of the family took the lead in the process, or who did most of the struggling. Stories and memories of and by Abeyta women will be the focus of part one of this chapter, in part because their contribution to keeping *Ojito del Caballo* in the family has remained unacknowledged in both the public record and within the family. Part two will explore 'the labour of existence' as read through the oral history interviews. The aim is to open pathways into the constellation of possibilities made real by the family's irrepressible commitment to their land. It is also an opportunity to honor and marvel at the wisdom, laughter, suffering, joy and energy of this family as expressed in their oral history interviews.

Although my initial motivation for this research was to understand the malevolently persistent threat to *Ojito del Caballo*, the interviews contain much more than chronologies of *chronotones*. If chapter one set out to map and understand *chronotones* on *Ojito del Caballo,* this chapter looks around, behind and between moments of struggle to constellations of memory and meaning. In part, this is to follow Michael Frisch's call to move beyond the "class-based ideology that sees ordinary people as sources of data, rather than as shapers and interpreters of their own experience."[87] The encounters that follow weave together various threads of experience expressed by the Abeytas, all in some way related to the work or labour that has always been necessary on *Ojito del Caballo*. Part of the magic of the ranch for the family seems to be that it remains a place that brings them into communion with one another, with the past and the future, and with the land. There have, as has already been demonstrated, also been a great many moments of conflict and even violence. *Ojito del Caballo* has never been a utopia, and neither have the family's relations with one another. But for those in the family who still maintain a connection with the land, *Ojito del Caballo* has become inextricable from how they remember and understand their family's past, and also therefore critical to imagining its future. The following encounters pay homage to the magic at work therein.

Fierce Abeyta Women

> (Leticia) "But I do want to remind you, Gabriel, that we want to do a little piece on each of those women - Grandma Barbarita, Grandma Laura, *tia* Cecilia, me and my sisters - those women and Shirley - who helped to keep the ranch in the family. Because in the very end it was the *women* fighting in the courts, the *women* fighting the land grant committee, the *women* fighting with the neighbours for their easements to make sure that their ranch stayed how it was. It was the women. And yeah the men are right there supporting them, but it was the women up front and centre doing those kinds of things to make sure that the ranch, right now, is where it's at today. So it was a big deal. It's a big

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[87] Frisch, 160.

> deal to see that it's been women - the Abeyta women. I say that the Abeyta women are the fiercest women because we've come a long way, baby."

> (Theresa) "…my dad and everybody else was so broke that it was always my *tia* Antonia, my *tia* Cecilia, that were scrounging to pay the taxes every year. Because my dad never worked. He had polio or something in that leg. He could never really work. But he did make money playing the guitar, you know, playing at dances and stuff like that. But the women - they would help with the kill of the goats, the making of this and that and that. The women were the ones that kept the family - the Abeyta family - together."

As Leticia Padilla and her sister Theresa Hernandez tell it, Abeyta women have played an outsized role in overcoming *chronotones* on *Ojito del Caballo* as well as in keeping the family together between externally imposed moments of struggle. Leticia frames the need to place Abeyta women at the center of the fight to keep the land as a reminder. A reminder is not the same as a story or a memory. It is an act of insistence. She is reminding me – her interlocutor and interviewer – and she is also reminding audiences of the future that the story of *Ojito del Caballo* cannot be told without acknowledging the centrality of Abeyta women to its continued existence as a place where the family can come together. Chapter One has already addressed key *chronotones*, all of which are notable in part because of the leading roles played by Abeyta women in overcoming them. This section will explore how the women of the family remember and understand the gendered nature of work and struggle on *Ojito del Caballo* and in their family – work that had remained largely unacknowledged until Leticia Padilla started doing research into the history of the ranch in the early 2000s. Below, Diana Padilla reflects on the moment when she and her mother found out about how Barbarita Ortiz de Abeytia showed up to Las Vegas Land Grant Board of Trustees to claim *Ojito del Caballo* for the family.

> (Diana) "…you know I was with her the day that she got the records that showed that her great-grandmother fought when they tried to take it from her. And I told my mom 'that's why we're fierce women. That lady right there.' With generational stuff also comes strength, resilience, all those things - not just the trauma and the conflict, but the wisdom

> that comes with it. That's where that comes from. Because my mom and her siblings are strong women. They're strong."

Diana emphasizes the connection between past and present, and in particular how the knowledge that her great-great-grandmother fought to save the ranch helps to make visible the strength of Abeyta women she grew up around. These women were always strong but learning of the lineage of struggle that saw generations of Abeyta women at the forefront contributed to making this strength visible, rather than taken for granted, in the present. This is in line with Gerda Lerner's assertion that "[i]n preserving the collective past and reinterpreting it to the present, human beings define their potential and explore the limits of their possibilities,"[88] which in this case applies specifically to "uncovering and interpreting the hidden history of women"[89] in the face of myths that place women in marginal roles in history. This is a recurring theme in how the Abeyta women interviewed for this project recount stories of women in the family. They tell stories about how past generations of Abeyta women found time, energy and strength to fight to save the land on top of the overwhelming responsibilities in the realm of social reproduction. Diana's reflection on learning about her great-great-grandmother can also be read in terms of temporality, where "anachronistic temporalities cease to be remnants of the past […] instead [they] open up new possibilities for reconfiguring the present."[90] These stories by Abeyta women about Abeyta women activates the past in a way that brings forth strength in the present. "[T]he remembering and the telling"[91] of family life on *Ojito del Caballo* activates the timeless in the face of capitalist modernity and its real abstractions against which constant struggle has been waged. Exploring the gendered nature of struggle on *Ojito del Caballo* is necessary not only because gender is so often an axis of oppression, but also because the gendered division of labour under capitalism makes possible "the enclosure of the world."[92] Here, Leticia elaborates on how and why Abeyta women stepped in at various moments of struggle.

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[88] Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 221.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Tomba, *Insurgent Universality*, 27.

[91] Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Out,* 14.

> (Gabriel) "Why do you think the women in this family have been in this position of being the ones to carry this fight on?"
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> (Leticia) "Because I don't think that they saw that the men in the family were going to do it. And they saw the importance of keeping it. They saw the importance of saving it. I think they saw the importance of having something for their kids, just how I think- maybe that's just because that's how I think. And I'm a lady in the family. That's how I think. I need to make sure that I have something for my kids. And I had to have gotten that idea or perception from somebody. It wasn't my mom... you know, for sure it wasn't my dad, you know? But it was my grandma and my *tia* Cecilia - I saw my *tia* Cecilia do what she did, and then she later explained how all that worked."

Leticia's explanation echoes her daughter Diana's in terms of the intergenerational transmission of strength. She *saw* her *tia* Cecilia intervene at a moment when the land was under threat, and so when another *chronotone* arose, this time threatening her *tia* Cecilia, Leticia stepped in with next to no thought. It was what needed to be done. Leticia had learned and watched, perhaps not always consciously, as the Abeyta women she grew up watching and learning from did what needed to be done, sometimes at great personal cost. Silvia Federici has argued that "the female body has been appropriated by the state and by men and forced to function as a means for the reproduction and accumulation of labour."[93] In the case of the Abeyta family and *Ojito del Caballo,* "reproduction" did not just mean taking care of children and managing the household but also maintaining access to their land. This is especially true given the evidence provided in Chapter One. Specifically, that part of the reason *Ojito del Caballo* was worth fighting to keep despite myriad obstacles is that it allowed for the existence of temporalities nonsynchronous from that of capital – for ways of being and living away from the meat grinder of unilinear time.

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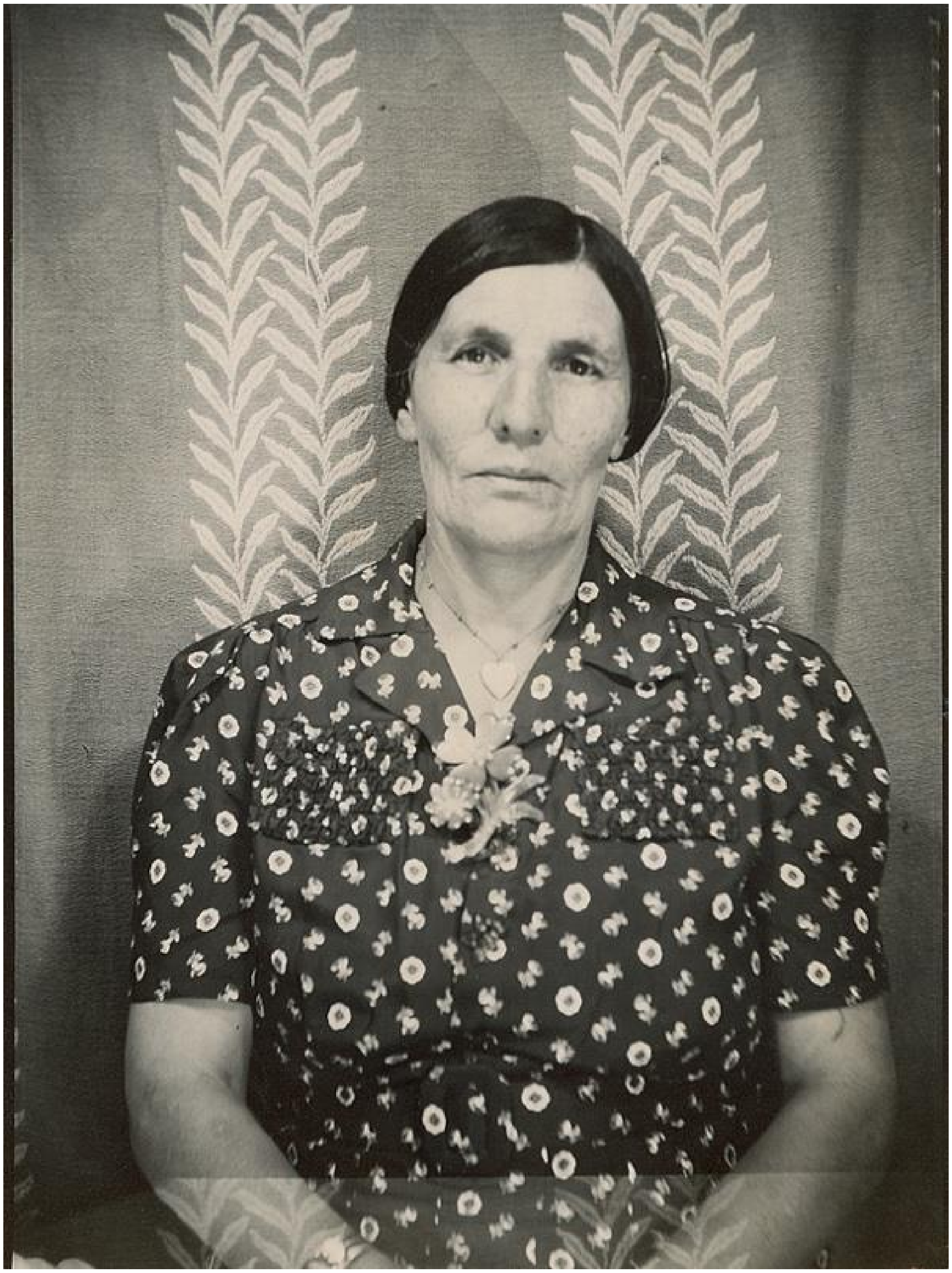
[92] Françoise Vergès, *A Decolonial Feminism*, Translated by Ashley J Bohrer, (London: Pluto Press, 2021), 80.
[93] Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, Second, revised ed., (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2014), 16.

Below, Laura Abeyta poses for a portrait. The image is a scanned silver gelatin print from Leticia Padilla's collection. She believes it was either taken at a photo studio in Las Vegas called Rex's, or at a photo booth at a carnival that visited the area. The photographer and the date of the photograph are unknown. The bottom of the photograph was double-exposed and Laura's face is slightly out of focus. Both facts suggest a speedy or amateur photographer. Laura is dressed up for the occasion. There are other photographs of Laura in this dress – it seems usually on special occasions such as when family was visiting – in the collection Leticia shared with me, which contains photographs kept and passed on to Leticia by her *tia* Cecilia and *tia* Antonia. Leticia and her siblings recall stories of Laura's adult daughters bringing her down from the ranch to go dancing and have their photographs taken at the carnival. If indeed this was taken at a carnival, the festivities and the event of the photograph being taken would have been moments that marked a rare reprieve from the constant of work on the land. As has been outlined already, Laura was one of the Abeyta women at the forefront of the material struggles to keep *Ojito del Caballo* in the family. Laura was forty-seven when her husband Felipe passed away in 1937. He was twenty-two years her senior and his death left Laura alone to parent their eleven children, manage the ranch, and struggle to keep the land in the family. Twenty years separated the birth of Laura's first child – named Barbarita after Felipe's mother – and her last child – Joce "Junior" Abeyta, Leticia Padilla's father. All of her children were born on *Ojito del Caballo* between 1909 and 1929. Laura lived most of her life on the land after marrying Felipe. She did not read or write and she never learned to speak English, and yet she successfully navigated numerous *chronotones* requiring those specific skills over the course of her life.



4. Unknown photographer. Laura Abeyta either at Rex's Studio in Las Vegas, NM, or at a photo booth at a visiting carnival, date unknown. Scanned silver gelatin print from Leticia Padilla's personal collection.

Leticia Padilla recounts her admiration for her grandmother for never having given up despite tax bills she wouldn't have been able to read, despite the economic deprivations brought on by the Great Depression, despite all of her adult able-bodied sons being drafted into the army during the Second World War, and despite always being responsible for the needs of the other nine children who were living with her on the ranch.

> (Leticia) “And then you have grandma - my God! It wasn't her brothers, it wasn't her men-children, including my dad, who was worried about losing the land - losing the ranch. And so she's probably doing the best she can with the cheeses and the milk and the things that she was working with. And then maybe the soldiers were helping her a little bit and sending her money when they could. And so she kept at it. She could have just as easily said 'ok screw it. This is way too much for me, I'm gone and moving to town’ or in the low-income housing, whatever, and have lost it. But she didn't. She fought. And somehow she found the money.”

5. ©Gabriel Ellison-Scowcroft. Leticia Padilla in her kitchen in Las Vegas, New Mexico, November 2019. Scanned colour negative film.

Leticia Padilla, pictured above in her kitchen in Las Vegas, is one of twelve siblings. Her eldest sisters and brothers were born on the land, and although she was born in town she spent much of her childhood at the ranch with her extended family. Leticia has been the engine behind the family's latest struggle over the ranch. This role was not one that she sought, and it was one that came with huge pressure and responsibility. Leticia chose to be the mediator, the researcher, the organizer and the caretaker when her elders and their land were threatened. The court battle alone cost tens of thousands of dollars and lasted nearly two decades. It created a schism in the family, and took its toll on the physical and mental health of many members of the family in terms of their physical and mental health. Leticia and her husband Lupe moved away from Las Vegas for work after they were married – first to Santa Fe and then to Pojoaque. When their youngest child Diana was a teenager, she remembers her mother making a promise to God that she would do everything to take care of her family, and in particular her elders, if she could find a way to move back home. Much like Leticia describes seeing her *tia* Cecilia intervene to save the ranch and understanding the implications later, Diana recounts the story of her mother as a "superwoman" whose tireless work she started to consciously appreciate only with the benefit of hindsight.

> (Diana) "I was thirteen when she promised she was going to come here and take care of the elders. And that's what she did. And part of taking care of them was not letting them lose their land. I had this baby and we were raising her and my mom was on a mission to find out everything she could about this place. And I was driving her. I didn't know what was going on. 'Cause that's the other thing. My mom also protected us from the stress of it. She didn't let us know that it was bothering her or hurting her, or that it was horrible. But as a young person I wasn't paying that much attention because she was this amazing woman all the time. So I was like 'superwoman, what can't she do?' So for me, watching her hustling… it was just part of who she was. So I wouldn't have even known until in hindsight 'whoa - not everybody does this.' Not everybody takes care of the elders, and goes to work full time, and takes care of her grandbaby, and all her kids, and all the whatevers. But still stays connected, and still is doing everything she can, maybe more than she needs to. Maybe not having really any boundaries - just 'I'm gonna help' because

> in her mind she made a promise to God probably. 'Cause my mom is a faithful woman. And maybe 'cause she said 'I promise God I'm gonna come here and I'm gonna take care of these elders' - the ranch being part of it. I don't think that she thought that when she said that prayer, she just wanted to be here with her family. That's what she wanted: she wanted to be home. Which is not Vegas, but her family. And it is home for her. It was about the same thing, I think, for me. About being here with her family."

One of the most poignant details provided by Diana is that despite being unbelievably busy and involved in all facets of family life, Diana didn't realize it was all taking a toll on her mother because Leticia never complained or let her children – even though they were all adults – know how difficult it was. Once again, there is an argument to be made here about social reproduction and specifically about how Leticia acted as the connector that held everything together while the fact of all the work being done by her remained almost invisible. In part Diana remembers this as a form of protection. Her mother took on all of the various stresses and didn't pass them on to her children because she didn't want them to worry. These heroics came with their costs: Leticia was diagnosed with cancer twice during the inheritance dispute, which both she and her family attribute to the burden of struggle she assumed. Writing about the work of care and cleaning, Françoise Vergès has argued that "[w]ear and tear on the body […] is inseparable from an economy that divides bodies between those who have a right to good health and to relax, and those whose health does not matter and who do not have the right to rest."[94] Here, Shirley recalls watching how the busyness and stress Leticia took on began to take its toll:

(Shirley) "Because she made herself sick! She was so stressed she got cancer, she almost lost her eye, the arthritis came through - I mean my aunty Letty was literally causing herself so much physical illness over the stress because she was the only one... everybody was just throwing it at Letty. 'Oh well Letty will take care of it, Letty will, will...' You can't expect my auntie Letty first of all to finance all of that, second of all to be the only one dealing with the emotional settings of that because she was the only one dealing with the emotional settings of that because she was also taking care of my grandfather."

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[94] Vergès, 77.

The toll of struggle – the stress, the exhaustion, the overwork – accumulated in Leticia's body, affirming Federici's assertion that "the body has been for women in capitalist society what the factory has been for male waged workers: the primary ground of exploitation and resistance."[95] The kind of work that Leticia was doing was work that generations of Abeyta women had done, and were expected to do, prior to her. Organizing and taking care of family was also something that Leticia and her sisters learned to do from a very young age. Velma Salazar is Leticia Padilla's eldest sibling. She was born and grew up on *Ojito del Caballo* before the growing family had to move into town. When I asked what it was like to grow up as the oldest sibling, she responded "too much responsibility." Velma would eventually have eleven siblings, and until she left the house to be married, she helped her mother care for them from a young age. These responsibilities were, and largely still are, carried overwhelmingly by Abeyta women. Velma cleaned, cooked, changed diapers, managed disagreements, forced unwilling children into clothes, and then cleaned and cooked some more. The work was incessant, never-ending, and exhausting. Below, Velma describes the dialectic of pain and strength that grew within this life of constant work lived by so many Abeyta women:

> (Velma) "With me it was no nonsense. It still is. My husband passed away in September, and everybody calls me and tells me I have to grieve. And I'm thinking 'what the heck are you guys talking about?' You grieve when you see them sick. And you help them, and you do everything in your power. And it was the same thing: my mother had a lot of kids, and I was the oldest. So I had to learn how to be helpful: diapers. There was always two kids with diapers. When she was born, Letty, the house is still there where she was born and it was surrounded by roads. From there I would walk to North Public, me and Theresa and Ralph and Tony. And then come home to eat. There was no food cooked, but we washed the dishes because there was the breakfast dishes from all the other ones that were there. And then go back to school. And then in the afternoon the same thing, and either we had to make tortillas or we had to help my mother make dinner or whatever. You just dove into it. Somehow you become... I talk about this all the time. I become like detached. It doesn't bother me very much, or whatever goes on in life. I just take it. Ok so this is happening, ok what's next? I'm not going to stand here. I'm not going to sit here,

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[95] Federici, 16.

> and I'm not going to wallow in whatever's going on here. Life's too damn short. I've gotta move on to what can I do? What's the next thing on the agenda?”
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> (Gabriel) “Where do you think you learned that?”
>
> (Velma) “I think from my grandmother. My grandmother was like that. '*Que vamos hacer hija?*' You know we learn from our mistakes, or from whatever's happened. And we don't do that again. We go to something else. And my mom had a hard life with my dad. My dad was a musician and he was my dad. Bottom line that's all I'm saying. But my mom had it rough with so many kids, and tied down with all these kids and stuff. But that was her choice. That was my mother's choice. But it gave me - should I say a stronger backbone? And my mentality is just moving forward. You don't have a choice. If you really understand that we're born to die from the womb to the tomb - what else is there? And you make life better for someone, and then when they die you pray for their soul, and that you helped some way. Because there's nothing else. And every human being, every creature, is born to die. How, we don't know. Or when, we don't know. So once you understand that you're not going to fight it. I won't. And so that's me. But I attribute all of that to my grandmother's upbringing; the strength that she gave me, really. And my mother's. The fun part came from my dad's side. You know - the dancing, and going out and having a good time. And yes, we need to have a good time. Because you can't just live and work, work, work, work. There has to be some fun in there. We have to have a time to laugh. There's a time for everything in this life - a time to cry, a time to laugh, a time to live, and then we die.”[96]

Velma attributes her steadfastness and strength – her ability to meet challenges with practicality– to the two women who raised her, and to the everyday reality of work she grew up watching and helping them do. “*Que vamos hacer hija?*” What can we do but move forward? This question brackets the intergenerational transmission of strength and trauma that Diana Padilla alluded to above. It is a statement that recognizes the unfairness of relations that dictate who has to work and who gets to play as well as property relations that subjugate entire populations to lives of scarcity. But it is also a question that contains the wisdom required to get through those injustices (there is only ever one way), and that recognizes that whether labour is constituted through exploitation or need it is still “simultaneously, a necessity, an injustice, and the essence of humanity throughout history.”[97]

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[96] Velma Salazar, Interviewed by Gabriel Ellison-Scowcroft, Las Vegas, New Mexico, January 18, 2022.

[97] John Berger, *Portraits: John Berger on Artists*, (London: Verso, 2015), 268.

In this excerpt Velma moves directly from recounting a childhood of "too much responsibility" to the inevitability of death, or rather to an attitude towards death that enables a living-in-the-present. Velma uses the word 'detached', which often means a separation from the present in order to remove oneself from pain or discomfort. But the way that Velma qualifies the word also suggests she does not wish to imply a purely dissociative or negative meaning. Detached, in this instance, can be read as being resigned to the necessity of the task at hand, and thus able to not dwell on its unpleasantness or monotony. This capacity to recognize the moment and react accordingly is a way of being learned from work and watching others work, but it can be applied to realms of living far beyond the necessity of labour. The example Velma provides is of grief, and more broadly the existential question of mortality. The grief that she describes is not limited to the event of the passing of her husband. In fact, it is the opposite: her grieving process took place primarily before his death, during his illness. Velma's grief was intimately tied to the work of taking care of and supporting and loving him through this time of illness rather than solely with the event of his passing. "Because there's nothing else" but the recognition of change and the finite amount of time to experience what is happening now. This is far from a passive approach to life that meekly receives the status quo. On the contrary, this way of being requires great strength and resilience to meet what is at hand without pretence, and then to move through it. Velma identifies this strength as something she received from her grandmother and mother, learned through the practice of incessant, often also oppressive, work. The two women Velma references spent most of their lives on *Ojito del Caballo*, where work and living were inseparable. I asked Diana – Velma's niece – about the gendered division of labour in the family, and after telling the story of learning her great-great-grandmother Barbarita had fought for the land she reflected on gender roles in the present:

> (Diana) "The women are still kind of controlling it, managing it, putting things together, kind of making sure it's still happening. But the men aren't just not helping - they're getting directions (laughs). They're being like 'hey you need to go get the grill going, get the hot dogs on the grill' or something like that. But the women are still guiding. They're still saying 'we're still doing this. This is still happening.' And I think my mom - maybe because she's still around and she's the one still doing it, and she's still saying 'hey we need to get this done.' Like I said a lot of things we do - it's like an impromptu thing. But a lot of them are still planned. Like our stations of the cross: our Easter celebration. It's still my mom and the *tias* saying 'hey we gotta get together and we gotta pray, and we got things to do.' And so I think they're still kind of guiding. I don't know if we would say they're being the boss, but they're the boss (laughs). And I think even for myself in my own family, I do tend to be making sure the things in the household go the way they go. You know, like 'hey we gotta be here at this time.' It's kind of like managing a household, right? The difference now, though, for women is that we still manage the household, but we still go to work. We work *and* manage the household. And generationally if you think about it, my mom took care of her dad. The boys were around and helped a bit. But my mom took care of her dad. My *tia* Velma and my mom took care of their dad and their *tias*, do you know what I mean? So it's almost like part of it: so you're going to go to work now, 'cause you wanted women's rights so now you go to work. *And* you still come home and manage the family, and manage the household, and manage all the extra parts."

Central to Diana's telling of gender roles in the present is the recognition that more "women's rights" has, in practice, meant more work. On top of the work of managing the household and networks of familial care – of social reproduction – Abeyta women are also in the workforce in ways that the earlier generations of women on *Ojito del Caballo* would not have been. Also telling is how Diana talks about the fact of Abeyta women pulling the strings behind virtually everything the family does: "I don't know if we would say they're being the boss, but they're the boss (laughs)." This suggests that it is still not entirely appropriate or possible to say the quiet part out loud – namely, that Abeyta women are, despite often being in the background, running the show, and that over the generations that the Abeyta family has been on the land they have played an outsized role in the struggles to keep *Ojito del Caballo* in the family and to keep the Abeyta family together. In the most recent set of *chronotones* – the inheritance dispute and twenty-year court battle followed by the family's lawyer threatening to take the ranch if she was not paid immediately – it was another woman in the family who stepped in when all was almost lost. Here, Theresa Hernandez reflects on her daughter's contribution:

> (Theresa) "It's sad that we had all this land and we were so broke and so poor. Isn't that sad? I don't know why. But we paid a lot of money - each one of us - to be able to keep the land. 'Cause they were ready to pick it up. Thank God my daughter and my son in law, they had the means to pay the attorney what we owed them. And then we were able to save the ranch. And that's how my daughter ended up with the acreage she has over there. She said 'I'll get the money, but I can't come out clean.' And she said 'if each one of you owners give me three acres, then I'll have my own land that I paid for.' Which she did. 'Cause if it wouldn't have been for that, we would have lost the property. 'Cause nobody had that kind of money."

The Abeyta's have never been monetarily wealthy. Theresa describes their situation – of having access to land but growing up desperately poor – as "sad." Coming up with the money to pay property taxes was a near-constant source of *chronotones*, let alone tens of thousands of dollars in legal and court fees. At the end, Shirley's contribution, according to her mother, was what stood between the family keeping their land and the family losing their land. Tellingly, something of the significance of this act is difficult for Shirley herself to acknowledge.

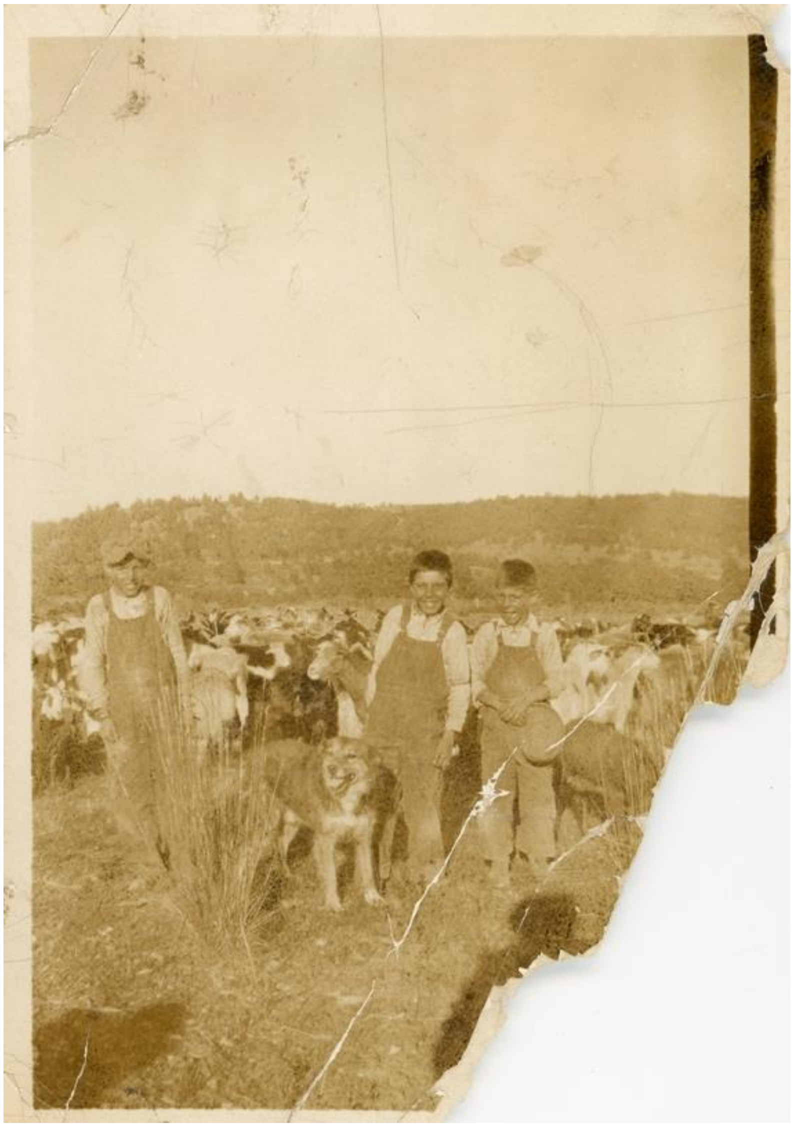
> (Gabriel) "I'm wondering how it feels for you to be part of that legacy, because Letty also talked about you that way - she said that 'we thought it was over and then the lawyer said well if you don't pay us twenty thousand dollars…' and she went through this whole lineage of women who have come in at the right time to save the land, and now you're part of that lineage (Shirley laughs and says "that's weird to hear"). How do you reflect on that?
>
> (Shirley) I don't know that I can because I don't feel like it was an extraordinary offer or gift to the family, it was just something that needed to be done."

We can return here to Leticia Padilla's reminder that began this section of the need to emphasize the recurring role of Abeyta women in the history of struggle over *Ojito del Caballo*. To a person, all of the women in the family repeated some version of Shirley's above statement in the interviews – that some demanding task they took on was simply something that needed to be done, and so does not merit any particular praise or attribution. Surely anyone, in their situation, would have done the same. Perhaps this is part of why Leticia sought to emphasize the role of Abeyta women in her interview – as much to make their contributions visible to one another as to others. Because theirs is not false modesty, and yet Shirley's above statement does not actually contain a contradiction: coming up with the money to pay off the lawyer was indeed something that needed to be done, but that does not mean that it was not an extraordinary offer or gift to the family. It was surely both. Over the course of the past century and a half on *Ojito del Caballo*, it has never been just anyone, it has, again and again, been Abeyta women who have stepped in when the hour was darkest.

The Labour of Existence

> (Joseph) "…my dad did things different from my grandfather, and I do things different from him. But I can see from being raised by my grandfather or spending so much time with him how he came about doing things like that, and doing things the way that he did. Like you say it's difficult explain. Even the way you saddle a horse and hold a horse. How my dad taught me to do it is how I do it. But how my grandpa did it - absolutely not! Like my grandpa... I don't want to say he was like a whisperer, but he just had the touch. He just had a hand. He didn't have to go to the field and get a rope and throw it over the horse's head and bring the horse into the corral and tie it up and saddle him. He could walk out into the middle of an empty field, put his hand out, and the horse would eat out of his hand. He'd walk back to the barn, the horse would follow him back to the barn, and he would saddle it. He didn't have to go through that extra step. And me (laughs) I gotta go out there with the rope sometimes 'cause I don't have that hand. But then again I didn't spend that time either. Like my grandpa grew up around horses, you know? I mean he rode horses and things before he was ever in a truck. You know my dad grew up around them also, and I grew up around them also, but that was their sole means of transportation at one point in time: that's all they really had at a point in time, you know? So he just had that hand and that way of going about things. And I try my best to fill that gap and bridge that gap for me. 'Cause I know I'm a whole different generation. And my boys, I mean, they're coming up in a totally different way. I don't ever expect my boys to be able to walk out in the middle of a field, put your hand out and have a horse follow you. But that's the goal, right?"

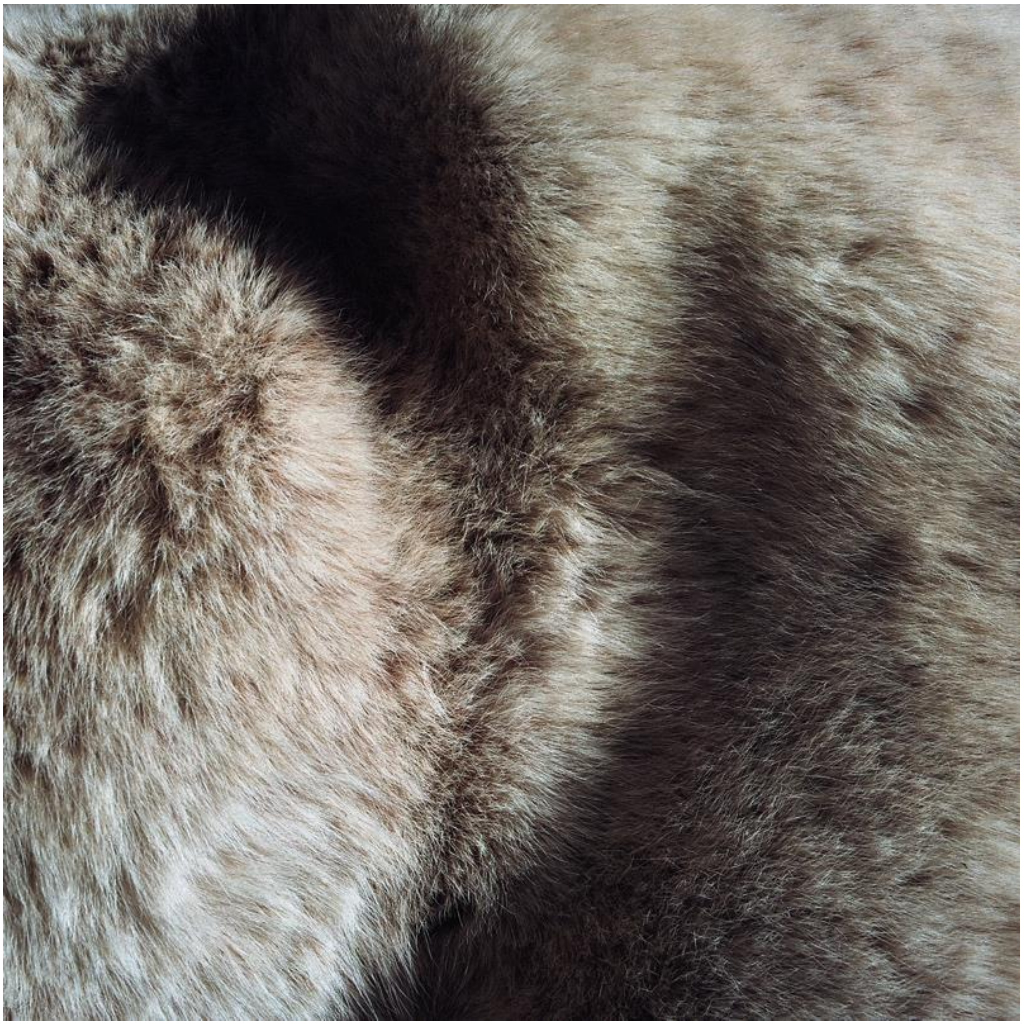
In this excerpt Joseph Abeyta wrestles with the difficulty of maintaining continuity in a fast-changing world: “And I try my best to fill that gap and bridge that gap.” He describes a space – between his experiences or ways of being and those of his father and grandfather – that grows larger with every passing generation. Partly it is a gap of temporalities – of qualitatively different experiences of time, but also quantitatively different temporal possibilities made real by technology. Joseph wrestles with how to articulate changes in experience across generations of his family, and he does so with a memory of his grandfather’s way of being around horses. Junior Abeyta’s life was enmeshed in the lives and habits of horses through necessity, work and play. He grew up around horses before vehicles, and because he spent so much time around them, he learned a way of being with them that was qualitatively different to the generations that followed him. There is nothing strictly necessary about the ability to walk up to a horse and have it follow you back without any of your physical effort having been exerted, and yet Joseph Abeyta finishes this excerpt by reflecting on how this way of being is “the goal”. So what is it that is worth “bridging that gap” in this experience? In Joseph Abeyta’s case, the practice has not been preserved, except in memory, but he is still grateful to have had the exposure to it because it speaks to a way of being where it is possible for someone to have “that hand and that way of going about things.” This way of being is one of greater connection to the surrounding world where the distinctions between seemingly separate things are blurred. The gap between Joseph’s grandfather and his children is one of decades, but also of a qualitative change in the speed of time. The rapidity of change experienced by Joseph, which he sees accelerating further in his children’s generation, widens the gap between ways of being much more efficiently than the time of decades. Different ways of being change ways of interacting with the world, and so changes what the world is to those living in it.



6. Unknown photographer. Nick, Rubel and Cayetano Abeyta on *Ojito del Caballo*, date unknown. Scanned silver gelatin print from Leticia Padilla's personal collection.

The above photograph shows Nick, Rubel and Cayetano Abeyta, perhaps in their early teens, herding goats. It may have been taken during the Great Depression or during the Second World War. Their father passed away in 1937. As we have already seen, this meant that Laura Abeyta was left alone with the responsibilities of the entire ranch and family to manage – even more so when her only adult male children were drafted into the army. It could be that this is one of the reasons these boys are working. There was simply no one else available to do the work.

All of them are wearing the same combination of shirt and overalls. They have the appearance of being camera shy, or at least aware of the peculiarity of being photographed, though it would be a mistake to label the boys' reaction as candid. This shy uncertainty is rare today, and has mostly given way to unwillingness, feigned indifference, or self-conscious performance. Their attitude of uncertainty, or awareness of the strangeness of the situation of being photographed, is in direct contrast to how at-home they otherwise seem in the landscape that surrounds them. The grinning cattle dog leans up against Rubel ever so slightly betraying their familiarity, and the goats they are herding fill the frame from side to side like the ridge in the distance behind them. They live in this landscape – on it, alongside it, inside it – and the landscape also lives in them. Perhaps Junior Abeyta learned his "whisperer" ways in part through herding goats like his brothers are doing here. He would have spent months, maybe years, of his childhood with them: watching them and their movements as individuals and in the group as they wandered around the ranch. He would have learned how to herd them back towards the house in order that his uncle might milk them, and he would have become conscious of their bodies in relation to his own body in ways that cannot be communicated in any other form than direct experience.



7. ©Gabriel Ellison-Scowcroft. Sammy, Diana Padilla and her daughters' horse, January 2022. Scanned colour negative film.

This is the point of Sammy's hip bone, or the juncture of a horse's hind legs and back. The undulating texture of the merger reveals the importance of the structure beneath. It is motion held still. After Diana rescued Sammy, her gave him a home on *Ojito del Caballo* where they feed and visit him every day. What is seen here is not bound by time in the same way as the older above photograph. It is, of course, from a particular moment – in this case, in 2022 – but it could also have been taken almost anywhere in the world where there are horses now or were horses in the past. This could have been the horse Junior Abeyta learned to ride on, and he surely would have recognized the image for what it was without any need for explanation. Joseph Abeyta also keeps horses on his father's section of *Ojito del Caballo* and is teaching his boys to ride. The horses form one of the bridges between his grandfather and his children that the ranch makes possible, even though his boys are growing up in a "totally different way" where spending their days herding goats is nigh unthinkable. Joseph's father Victor did not grow up with goats either, but he did live with scarcity in ways his grandchildren certainly do not:

> (Victor) "We didn't have a heater that you just get up and turn the dial, you know, we had to go outside. If you ran out of wood (laughs) you're gonna freeze your butt 'cause it's cold! It's cold up here. The houses were made out of adobe and they were cold and you took a bath in a... what do you call it? A stock tank. There's nothing else you know? But you washed yourself, you took care of that, no? Those simple things, little things, that people take for granted? I don't. If I walk into my house and I take a shower, I'm fortunate because I know what it's like not to have a shower. Or not to have hot water. Cold showers (laughs) they're the bomb! You know... so what? I was clean. Life isn't easy, you know. Those that don't know what it's like to be cold, to be hungry, and to get up one morning and say I don't have nothing to do today.' Must be nice. Must be nice. There's always something to do. You know, even if you're home. I mean if you get up in the morning - make your bed. You did something. You know if you didn't do your bed or you just swept the little fireplace in front of it? You did something. When they say 'oh there's nothing to do.' They're sitting around in their pajamas all day - God give them more! You know? 'Cause they're fortunate, you know."[98]

Victor ends his recollection about the scarcity he experienced during his childhood, and his subsequent gratitude for more abundant times, with an appreciation of the importance of work. The implication is that alongside the gratitude he feels for material niceties he will never take for granted is also gratitude for the practice of work. Both experiences taught him to appreciate what is beyond abstractions. I am using the words 'work' and 'labour' interchangeably here and am intending them to be understood as practices that go far beyond what is often associated with these words – i.e. the work or labour of a job for wages. For Victor, the imaginary people who spend all day in their pyjamas, in other words people who have no experience of what work reveals, are missing out. This is not a matter of moralizing, but rather of improper recognition. “God give them more!” There is joy to be found in the recognition of work’s necessity, or perhaps what work reveals about of the flow of reality, just as there is joy to be found in being warm on a cold night. Victor’s recollection of growing up without central heating hints at the relationship between scarcity and the recognition of labour’s significance. On the ranch the houses were, and are, heated with wood felled and split on the land. Winters can be bitterly cold on *Ojito del Caballo,* so going without adequate heat is never an option. In the absence of turning a dial, the work of creating the heat for survival – which is itself a circular process of felling, sectioning, splitting, drying, stacking, and moving – is inseparable from living.

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[98] Victor Abeyta, Interviewed by Gabriel Ellison-Scowcroft, Las Vegas, New Mexico, January 17, 2022.

The way that Victor links scarcity and the constant of work, even if it is not always voluntary or wanted, speaks to the intimate link between labour and reality. In the century and a half of tumultuous and violent change that has enveloped the family’s presence on the land, and despite many hardships, this qualitative connection to the unfolding of time, and the labour that entails, has been one of the constants on *Ojito del Caballo.* This discussion of the Abeyta family’s relationships to, and memories of, work is not intended to romanticize scarcity or the wounds it so often creates. Victor clearly does not wish the experience of being cold or hungry on anyone. I wish instead to draw attention to how the memory of these hardships is connected in this excerpt to work and how, as a practice, Victor remembers it as essential.

The connection between unwanted scarcity or work, as here articulated by Victor and as above articulated by Velma, was always accompanied in the oral histories with a reflection on the strength getting through that difficulty provided. For Victor, it taught him to be grateful for whatever he does have. For Velma, it taught her never to dwell too long in the difficulty or unpleasantness of any situation. The labour of existence – of reality as itself a form of production[99] – is parallel to the practice of hope. Without this labour, broadly defined, there is no existence. Without practice, there is no hope. In both cases there is no ultimate resting point, only the recognition of change. This recognition of the continuity of change is at once oppressive and liberatory. Oppressive because the prospect of little rest in the face of metastasizing "real monsters [that] really produce a monstrous imaginary"[100] is daunting and exhausting. Liberatory because the recognition of never-ending change, at a level at once below and above history, reveals the potential infirmity of these monsters. Walter Benjamin's words are useful here: "Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious."[101] The conditions of capitalist accumulation that brought about *Ojito del Caballo*'s existence and the subsequent poverty, hardships, and toil of generations of Abeytas have produced the monsters of unnecessary suffering. But this suffering is never the whole story. This is why the discussion of the labour of existence and the Abeyta family's own reflections on scarcity and work are included here. They do not romanticize hardship, but neither are they entirely bitter towards it. Although there has been much unnecessary suffering, *Ojito del Caballo* has been the site of generations of Abeytas learning and living through work.

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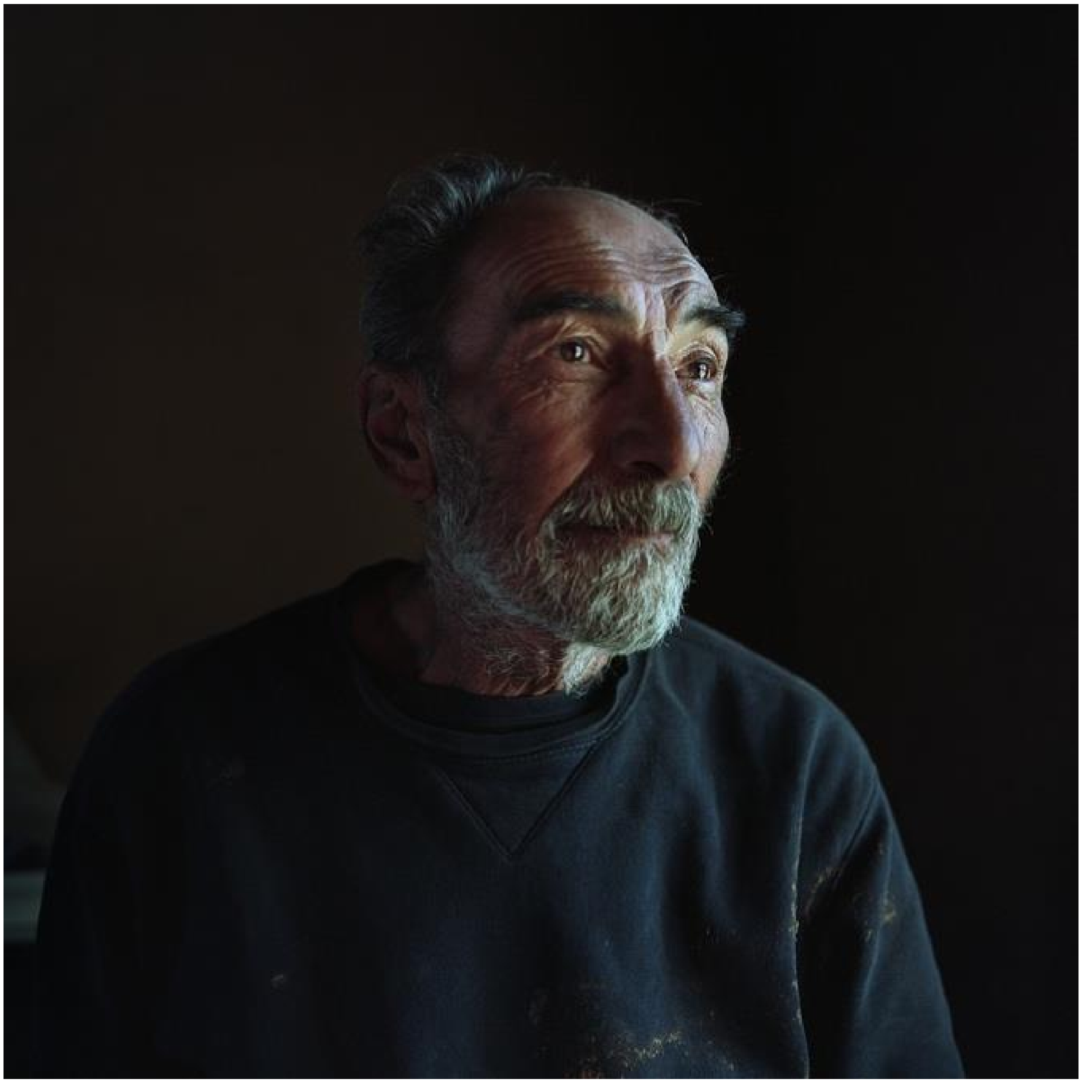
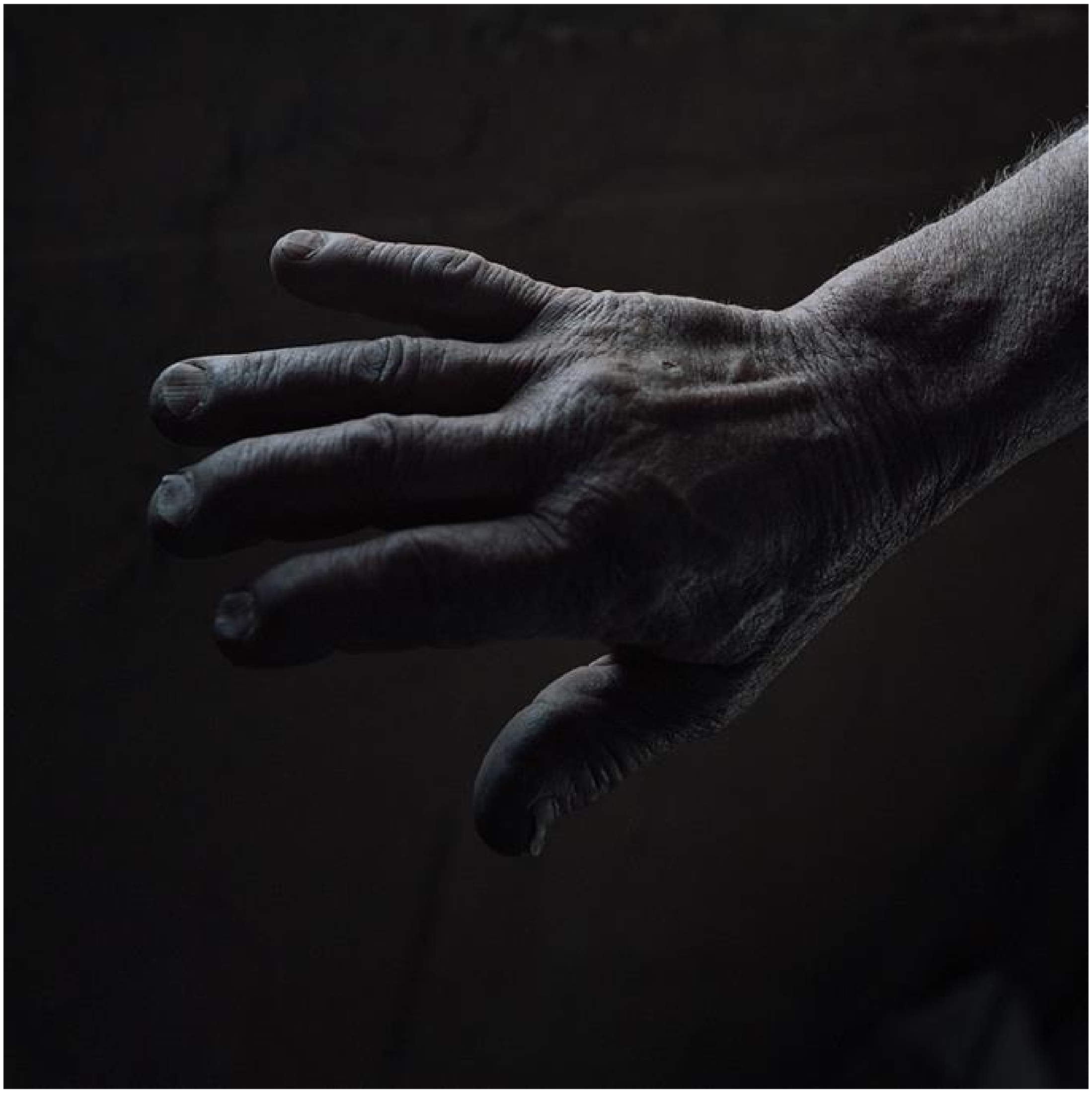
[99] Berger, *Portraits*, 269.
[100] Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities*, 94.
[101] Benjamin, 199.

The physical labour of the family has remained connected to *Ojito del Caballo* since their ancestors moved onto the land. Labour and living were, in fact, inseparable for the first century of the family's presence on the ranch. The photographs below pay a small homage to this physical labour. The first photograph is of Leroy Abeyta, the second of one of his hands. At the time they were taken, he was helping his nephew to restore the Adobe house his aunt, and before that his grandmother, once lived in. While I was photographing him, Leroy listed off the litany of physically intensive jobs he has worked – plumber, builder, dishwasher, mason, plasterer. He is especially proud of his work with adobe. But his hands tell the story of this labour differently than words. "They're all fucked up," he said with a laugh when I asked if I could photograph them. His fingers look impossibly strong, and their relative thickness is betrayed by the delicate bone connecting his middle finger to his wrist. It is easy to imagine the impact of the wayward swing of a hammer or a stone dropped accidently, or the dust absorbed from innumerable projects which have left the nails flattened, ribbed and raised at the tips. Leroy, like all of his siblings, learned of the necessity of labour in his childhood. This labour came in many forms: firewood, canning fruits and vegetables, picking piñon, building or fixing what was needed, herding goats, and running fences being just a few examples. Almost all this labour took place on the ranch in the company of family.

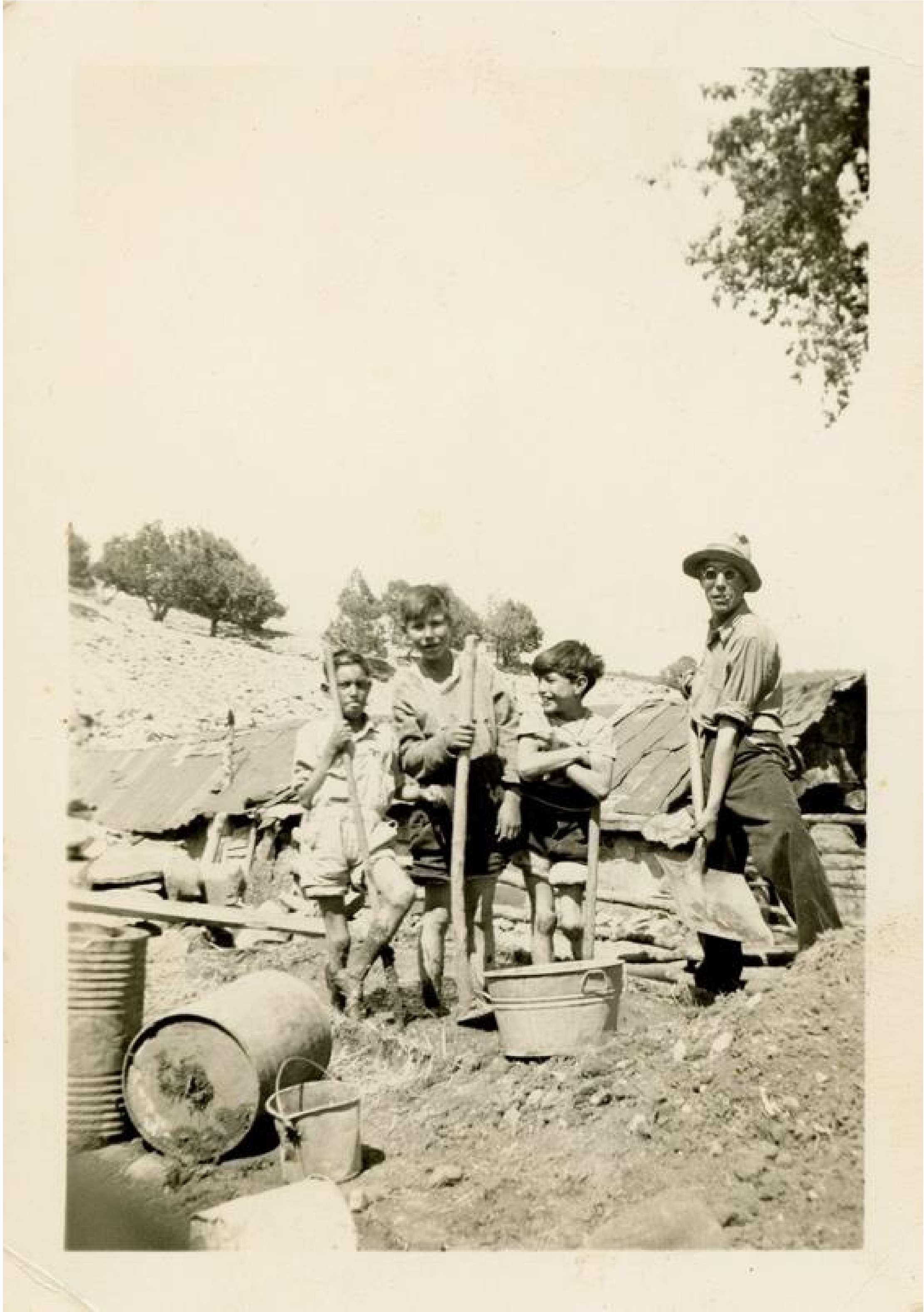
The third photograph is of Leroy's uncles Cayetano and Rubel, his father Junior and his great-uncle Tomas working on some long-finished project on the ranch. In the background is what today serves as the chicken coop. Leroy and Victor's father stands directly above the bucket in the center of the frame. As in the photograph where he is herding goats, he is here working within a trio of siblings. The tools carried by these young boys are as tall or taller than they are. They look no older than ten. While it seems likely that they are grouped together for the purpose of the camera, there is no doubt that the boys have been engaged in work and not simply performance for the photograph. Their pants are rolled up to their thighs and their feet are muddied. My eyes linger on the light that falls on Junior Abeyta's knees, which are the skinny and knobbly variety of youth or great age. It is this more than any other feature that, for me, brings together the friction of age and labour – the intent and seriousness behind rolled up trousers and the slender legs of youthful boys. The photographed moment does not reveal reluctance to the task at hand. Work and laughter coexist here. The uncle's smile is hidden beneath his cigarette, but it is an easy expression, if also resigned and knowing: work is constant, arduous, necessary.



8. ©Gabriel Ellison-Scowcroft. Leroy Abeyta in his aunt’s former house on *Ojito del Caballo*, January 2022. Scanned colour negative film.



9. ©Gabriel Ellison-Scowcroft. Leroy Abeyta’s hand, January 2022. Scanned colour negative film.



10. Unknown photographer. Cayetano, Rubel, Junior and Tomas Abeyta at work on *Ojito del Caballo*, date unknown. Scanned silver gelatin print from Leticia Padilla's personal collection.

Another of Victor's siblings, Ralph Abeyta, is nearing the opposite end of life to his father in the above photograph. Ralph was also born on the ranch and, like his father, grew up herding goats and being pulled by a horse-drawn sled to town when it snowed. Age has slowed him down in some ways, but he still comes to the ranch every day – mostly to work with Victor on whatever project he's got going. Work – not employment, but labour – remains important to him. On the day we did our interview he was helping Victor mill pine trees into rough lumber. Ralph is soft spoken, and when he pulled up in his truck and slowly made his way over to the mill, picked up his gloves, and checked the water line that cools the blade, he did so without a greeting, or any words at all:

> (Ralph) "I'm already seventy years old and I'm... going down. But I try to do this, and do that, no? To get my life going. I don't want to get ill or whatever. *Pero* after my wife died, the second wife, I decided just to do nothing. I used to be a mechanic, but I love it up here- that's why I come up here. 'Cause I can stay at home. I go crazy at the house. 'Cause there at the house you can't do nothing, just stay in and this and that. *Por que* if [something] breaks - the water line or whatever, you can't fix it. You have to call the house and they come down and fix it for you. So I don't do nothing in town. But after I lost my brothers, I had four brothers that I lost, we used to come up here every weekend and enjoy ourselves and go hunting up here. We used to go hunting up here. And Tony my brother, the one that followed me, he had a ranch up in *Ojitos Frios* - I used to go up there and help him a lot *tambien*, no? But we were always here - me and Gilbert, Jimmy, Joe... and Tony. But I miss them like crazy. I sit here and wonder and I think about them. What we used to do - go hunting and this and that. But I love it up here."[102]

Ralph makes a strong distinction between town and the ranch, and this distinction is centered on work. In the apartment he occupies in town, there is no work to be done because it is all taken care of by the owners of the building. On the ranch there are always things to be done: someone to help, something to build, chickens or horses to feed, firewood to split. Ralph's ageing and retirement bring the question of work to the fore. Indeed, retirement is understood as the cessation of work. But for Ralph, retirement and the comfort of having his material surroundings taken care of produce a stagnant, rather than generative, stillness, and the land is where Ralph comes to reconnect – both to the present moment of reality-as-production through work as well as to the past and to memory. In particular, Ralph recounts being on the land with brothers who have since died. The loss of these brothers and of the things they used to do together does not, however, deter Ralph from coming to the land. Although the memories are proof of profound loss, they are also proof of that which is so valuable about *Ojito del Caballo* to the Abeyta family. “But I love it up here” is the phrase Ralph repeated most throughout our interview. Sometimes he seems to imply that this is true despite loss and at other times because of loss. Either way, he comes back every day to the place that weaves together the threads of loss, work, and life into a tight braid, just as it has done for his family since their arrival on the land.

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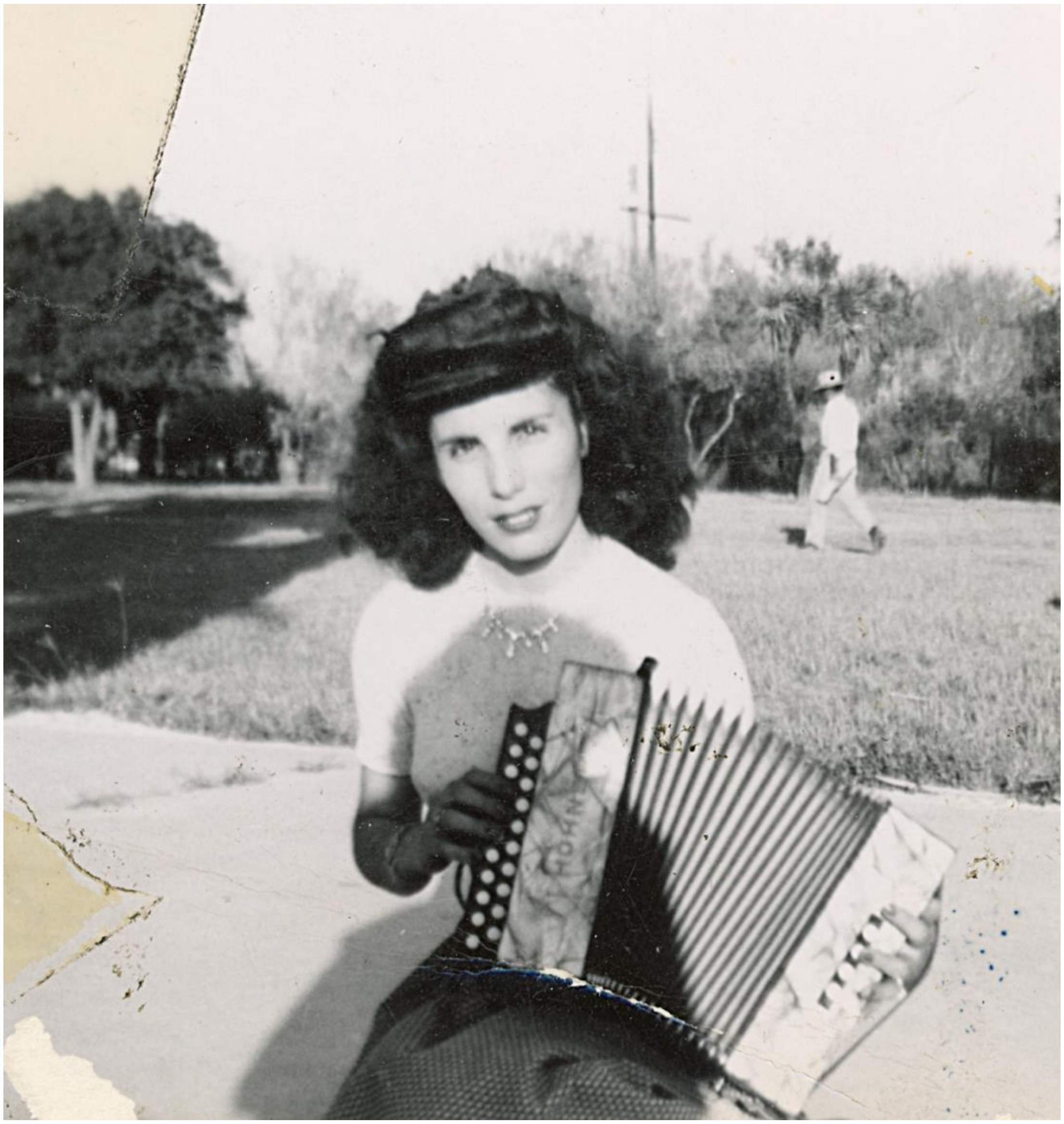
[102] Ralph Abeyta, Interviewed by Gabriel Ellison-Scowcroft, Las Vegas, New Mexico, January 17, 2022.

Physical labour is not the only way that the labour of existence is remembered by the Abeyta family. The times outside of work – the fun that is required alongside work, as Velma tells it– are almost always associated in the oral histories with music. Music, like work, lives in the present. It marks the passage of time much in the same way that labour marks the passage of time – through a continuous and uninterrupted flow that renders time tangible. Work and music were two constants of life on the ranch. Here Shirley Hernandez remembers a story her *tia* Cecilia told her about her wedding.

> (Shirley) “When she got married the first time she married a serviceman. And when she got married for the first time - you've been up here so you know that when it rains you're not getting off the mountain. You're staying put because you can't get off the roads as jacked up as they are. Her wedding lasted a week. The musicians would sleep and take turns. And there was always people cooking and there was always people playing, and everyone just lived up here for a week partying because what else were you going to do? You couldn't get off the mountain because it was raining the whole time, so they just kept

going. And I told my *tia* ‘how many musicians did you guys have?’ She goes 'oh there were dozens *hita* - everybody was up here,’ everybody could play something or help play something or was teaching somebody how to do something and they just had a blast. She would also tell us the stories of when camp Luna had all the soldiers. And the soldiers had gotten banned from going into town because they were raising a ruckus. So some of them knew about the Abeytas, so they weren’t banned from coming up the mountain. So they came up the mountain and they would come party with my grandfather and my aunt and my uncles. And they would stay up here and they would roast a goat, you know my grandfather would pick his fiddle and they'd just come and party. They were the party family, the party household - that was their thing (laughs).”



11. Unknown photographer. Cecilia Abeyta-Peña holding an accordion, date and location unknown. Scanned silver gelatin print from Leticia Padilla’s personal collection.

Here, Shirley's *tia* Cecilia plays an accordion in an unknown location at an unknown date. She is dressed sharply, and the small glint on the fourth finger of her left hand might be a ring. If it is, perhaps she would have played this accordion at her wedding. The photographer's shadow covers most of her body, which could suggest a kind of intimacy or proximity – maybe a family member taking a picture before Cecilia performs. Cecilia was one of the only women in the family to play music alongside the men. Shirley's story about Cecilia's wedding depicts a party lived to the fullest. When it wasn't possible for people to leave, they just kept playing and playing. There are many stories in the oral histories about how parties started at the drop of a hat and continued as long as someone was still playing music. When soldiers stationed at the nearby Camp Luna during the second world war had nowhere to go, they came up to the ranch and suddenly it was a party. This chapter has presented a series of encounters with photographs and oral history excerpts in an attempt to expand the historical and experiential frame into life on and around *Ojito del Caballo.* The exploration of the 'labour of existence' is intended to show how *Ojito del Caballo* has played a role in making possible a way of being in the world that contains, in Velma's words, "a time to live, a time to cry, a time to laugh, and then we die."

Conclusion
On The Future of *Ojito del Caballo*

This thesis attempts to demystify the processes and relations that have produced so many moments of struggle on *Ojito del Caballo*, while also holding space for mysteries in the Abeyta family's experiences with their land and each other. Whether these mysteries have to do with faith, with what is revealed in the way a person approaches a horse, or how experiences of the cruelty of scarcity can be transformed into generosity and strength, they must not be taken for granted. This has arguably never been more important, when so much of "[t]oday's culture, instead of facing mysteries, tries to outflank them."[103]

The answers to my research question, 'how do the Abeyta family remember and understand the various struggles to keep *Ojito del Caballo* in the family, and how do they speak of its importance today?' have involved unpacking the interactions the Abeyta family have had with private property relations and their enforcer property law. All of the *chronotones* documented in this thesis are mediated through the law, and all of the stories and memories about struggle over land recounted by the Abeytas in the oral history interviews in some way relate to it. *Ojito del Caballo* came into existence as part of a wave of enclosures spurred by the arrival of speculative finance capital in northern New Mexico. The Abeyta family have been dealing with the contradictions resulting from the legal apparatus that codified these enclosures ever since. These property relations are bound to produce conflict – especially for those without access to power or capital, which are often one and the same. The women in the family remember these *chronotones* as having been overcome as the result of generations of Abeyta women carrying the burden of struggle on top of the already-heavy gendered division of labour inside their homes. To a person, the Abeytas I interviewed do not remember or understand *Ojito del Caballo* to be a purely financial asset. Not once in the interviews did the family speak of the ranch as an investment or as something that is important to them because of its value in terms of exchange. In purely financial terms, the land has arguably exerted a net drag on the family's financial resources, especially recently. Instead, the Abeyta family often speak about the land in ways that reveal a different relationship to time than the dominant and synchronizing unilinear time of capital. Specifically, that the land provides them with a particular sense of connection to the past and future – to the children of the future and the wisdom of their elders, as they so often say. Above all, the Abeyta family mostly remember things other than struggle and hardship on *Ojito del Caballo.* It is a place where they are never alone, even when they are physically by themselves:

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[103] John Berger, *Here Is Where We Meet*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 132.

> (Victor) "When I'm here I go to the *ojito* sometimes or I go for a walk and I can actually picture my brother and my dad walking down to the *ojo* to go check the cows, and I remember a lot of them… My dad used to say the same thing - that every once in a while he'd get a glimpse of his own dad. And it's interesting because my dad would talk about stuff like that a lot. That he'd see his own brothers and stuff like that. And it's crazy, but it happens here a lot. If you put your mind to it... Even sometimes I come up by myself and I'm talking to my brothers. Like a dumbass. Sometimes people think that I'm a little bit crazy: 'please brother help me get this shit done, please!' (laughs) It's just the way it is, no? And as they were growing up my dad would say the same thing. That he'd go for wood and stuff and he'd see his dad coming down from the bottom of the *ojo* to do stuff. And he'd see him walking out, but nobody was there. But he had him in his mind."

A lengthy reflection by Joseph Abeyta follows this paragraph. He was very animated at this point in the interview, which was towards the end of our conversation, and he was leaning forwards, his elbows on his knees, looking me in the eye. Anxiety is the wrong word, but there was certainly a kind of uneasy urgency to his posture and tone. For all that he can also imagine the children of the future climbing the same trees and learning to drive on the same dirt roads as he did, he is also painfully aware that there are many reasons to believe the future will not be rosy. He lists off the Abeyta's immediate neighbors and points out how none of them are from the area anymore and how all the owners who would have been his great-grandparents' neighbors sold their land. Usually, "not because they want to." Although he does not say this explicitly, the description is vivid: the Abeyta family have been surrounded. Remarkably, this reflection is not accusatory. He does not wish ill on those who have moved in next door even if the implication of what he is saying is that he would rather they stayed away. He speaks about the neighbors as though they are homogenous, or homogenized. They are irritatingly, boringly, predictably similar; they are representative of the synchronizing temporality of capital; they are the synchronized who are "thinking for progress" in places that are, to them, new, exciting and exotic– places where others are already living. Joseph articulates an implicit relationship: that the inability of the people who have been there for generations to keep their land has everything to do with the ability of others to purchase it.

> (Joseph) "People are selling hand over fist. Not because they want to. Some people are forced out. Property taxes get high, the neighbour moves in and he's a millionaire, I gotta give up this land, or hey grandpa died and the kids don't want to take care of it and deal with it. Grandma lives in El Paso, and all my siblings live in California, they don't want nothing to do with that. So they just sell it off in chunks. I mean ours is broken down, but at least it's broken down inside of our family. I mean that's one of the few things that I can at least rely on is that, I mean, that may not be our open area... our land, our space, it may not be free access to everybody. But that's my auntie. I can go ask my auntie. That's my uncle's - I can go ask my *tio*. This belongs to my other auntie or this belongs to my cousin Steve, I can go ask him 'hey - do you mind if I cut this tree here' or 'do you mind if I do that?' You can't do that if it's, no offence, the Texan from fricken El Paso who just won millions and bought the land next door. You're not going to be able to do that. And even now like the property that used to belong to the Pino's belongs to a different family now. The property that belongs - I mean Alan Aires still has his, but same thing you know Alan Aires isn't from here. He's a giant white man. He came in and bought that whole ranch up there. Him and my grandpa had a good relation, which is awesome that we can still go for a ride up there on the horses and it's not a big deal. But he could have been somebody that's not ok with that. And then like I say, next door, the ranch and the property that runs alongside the reservoir, they're brand-new owners too. And they want

> to know about the film industry and this and that, and it has an overlook of the castle, and they're thinking for progress like that."

Joseph points out that *Ojito del Caballo* has been "broken down" as a result of the most recent *chronotone.* The reasons for this were discussed in Chapter One. It is the first time since Joce and Barbarita moved onto the land that it has been separated into segments. He also notes that "at least it's broken down inside of our family." The Abeytas come and go through each other's plots freely. There are no locked gates. Grandchildren play where they want and the family shares resources, though as Joseph notes this now involves needing to ask a given owner for permission. Others – particularly the older generation – noted that these internal property boundaries have been helpful in terms of encouraging dialogue, or asking for things rather than just taking them. But, as Joseph articulates above, it is only familial relations that prevent these boundaries from becoming the rigid and exclusionary abstractions they are in law. While in the case of the Abeyta family these relations have historically mostly been a source of strength, all families are complicated, imperfect and at times difficult to navigate. Joseph is no doubt right to feel unnerved, not because the Abeyta family are bound to cause trouble with one another but because as external pressures mount – such as skyrocketing property taxes linked to the building of multimillion dollar homes by their neighbors – it is difficult to predict what might happen to those family relations. And yet, of course, there is also hope. This thesis is about how the Abeyta family have continually shown up for struggle over *Ojito del Caballo* and about how they find strength in stories of struggle from the past. *Ojito del Caballo* has been enmeshed in their family relations for a century and a half, and it is unlikely that attempts to sever those connections would be met with anything other than stiff resistance. Joseph's cousin Shirley Hernandez's outlook is not rose-tinted either. But her interview contains many moments of steely determination that are far from pessimism or fear. She ended our interview this way:

> (Shirley) “Maybe it was because I had legal training, maybe it was because I spent time dealing with negotiations a lot, but to me I feel like if we can talk about it we can make things work a lot better. You gotta talk, you gotta communicate, and you gotta try and make the peace. It's worth it. Not everybody is worth it, but the strength of the family is worth it. There's individual members of the family that everybody would be happy to see gone (laughs)... but that's true for every family. And for us, you know, you think about those bad elements and you're like ‘ok you're not going to take this house down.’ This house is an adobe house, and that's getting stronger every year. This is not made out of cards, this is not made out of sticks. You're going to have to try really hard to break us apart.”

One way to appreciate the wisdom in this statement is to recognize that it is possible to substitute other words for ‘family,’ not in the sense that Shirley’s description necessarily applies to many communities both large and small, but that it *could.* In my mind, it applies to the largest community we know: the community of the living. Soon after I completed the oral history interviews for this thesis, the Calf Canyon and Hermit’s Peak wildfires merged and together burned nearly three hundred and fifty thousand acres of forest in northern New Mexico from April through August 2022. Thousands of people were forced to flee, close to a thousand homes were incinerated, and unspeakable numbers of animals and plants were engulfed in the flames. Leticia Padilla sent me this photograph on May 7th of that year as the uncontrollable fire neared the city of Las Vegas and the family’s land:

12. ©Leticia Padilla. The Calf Canyon fire burns the hills north of Montezuma, New Mexico, May 2022. Digital image.

The fire is almost 10 kilometers away in this photograph, but its size and ferocity are apparent even from this distance. Leticia and the rest of the Abeyta family, under evacuation orders, were forced to sit and watch as the fire moved closer and closer to *Ojito del Caballo*, until eventually it reached it. In the days before, fire fighters used bulldozers to clear spaces around the buildings on the ranch in an attempt to protect them. Mercifully, their attempts succeeded. When the family were able to return to *Ojito del Caballo* to assess the damage, they found all the structures intact, although many of the trees on the land were burned, dead or dying. Many other people in the surrounding area were not so lucky, losing homes and livelihoods. There has since been a spike in respiratory illnesses in the region because of the smoke and dust, and the community's access to clean water is imperiled because of toxic levels of ash in the already-scarce water supply. This year, dangerous floods have caused immense damage as the runoff from once-alive forests is channeled into overflowing streams.

This thesis maps out the experiences of struggle, resistance and hope in a family who have fought very hard to keep their family together – a process which has also necessitated constant struggle to keep and protect the family land. Thus far their struggles have been successful: the family are still on the land. The question I asked myself as I obsessively checked the simulated fire map to see if it had reached *Ojito del Caballo* and waited for updates from the Abeytas, was 'what will this struggle – or any struggle against injustice or enclosure or violence – mean if climate change and the system causing it are not addressed?' The Abeyta family have worked, lived, laughed, grieved, been birthed, and died on *Ojito del Caballo* for close to a hundred and fifty years. Their continued presence is the result of continuous resistance to a system which always places profit before life and which actively destroys many forms of life, our planet, relationships, and collectivity as it simultaneously produces injustice, racialization, poverty, and violence in many other forms. It is this same inhuman system that is responsible for climate change. It, like the fire, is an inferno that consumes life and leaves landscapes ravaged and desolate. How the origins of this crisis are diagnosed plays a large role in determining how solutions are proposed, and so I must insist, following Jason W. Moore, on the need to identify this era as the Capitalocene,[104] where the imperatives of capital always come first.

If anyone could find a way to successfully struggle against a fire as big as the Calf Canyon Fire, it would have been the Abeyta family. They have overcome every obstacle placed in their path, despite myriad structurally imposed constraints, in their fight to maintain their family's presence on *Ojito del Caballo*. I am being hyperbolic, but the point is that this crisis is one that is too big for any family, community, or nation to address on its own. Climate change is an existential threat and it will require an internationalist response – as well as the recognition of the disproportionate blame carried by those countries that have stolen 'resources,' including human beings, and converted them into capital for centuries – if unthinkable suffering is to be avoided. In their struggle over and on land, the Abeytas have been organized, they have pooled resources, they have shown up for the difficult conversations, they have sacrificed, and they have fought. I see hope in their struggles and their victories because they show what it is possible to do when a collective takes precedence over an individual. Theirs is an example, in microcosm, of what could be – of what *must* be – if the present climate emergency that is another crisis in the never-ending series of crises produced by capitalism is going to be meaningfully addressed.

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[104] Moore, 169.

13. ©Gabriel Ellison-Scowcroft. Clouds carrying monsoon rain over Montezuma, New Mexico, July 2017. Scanned colour negative film.

This photograph was taken in July 2017 when I started the initial photographic process that would eventually lead to this thesis. It depicts a cloud carrying monsoon rain from the nearby Sangre de Cristo mountains – rain that is increasingly scarce and unreliable, and therefore ever more precious, as New Mexico has been in an official drought for decades. I am reminded of a reflection by Walter Benjamin about the rapid and violent changes to human experience produced by capitalist modernity that he saw all around him and that he chronicled in his essay *The Storyteller*. "A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body."[105] The same could be said of today, except that even the clouds have been changed. The clouds of today are victims of the same violent processes Benjamin described almost a century ago. Everything alive, and even the lives of the wind and the clouds and the oceans and the rain, is threatened. "For the earth to live, capitalism must die."[106]

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[105] Benjamin, 27.

[106] Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance*, (London: Verso, 2019), 257.

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