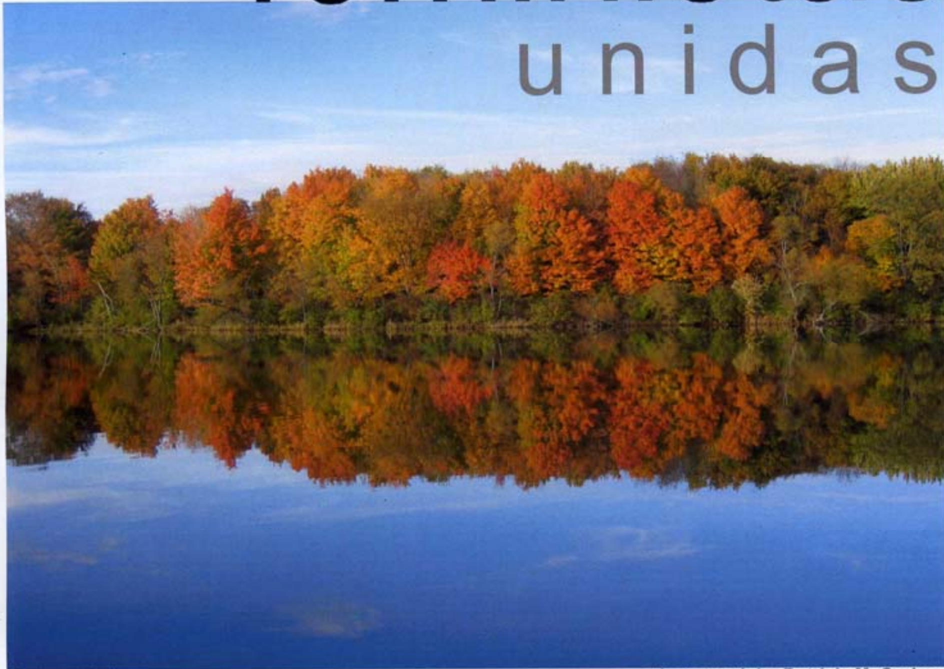
feministas unidas



Dawson Lake — photograph by Patricia M. Carlson

A Coalition of Feminist Scholars in Spanish,Spanish-American, Luso-Brazilian, Afro-Latin American, and U.S. Latina/o Studies

Fall 2005 — Volume 25.2

About the Artist

Patricia M. Carlson was born in Minneapolis, MN in 1957. Her family moved to Long Beach, CA., when she was 3 years old. It was here, between the majestic Pacific Ocean and the emerging LA freeway system, that Patti got her *groovitude* and a keen eye for everything beautiful. Her passion for beauty led her to get a degree in Environmental Design from the University of California, Los Angeles. She moved to Bloomington, IL., more than a decade ago with her husband Daniel and two children, Nate and Catherine. In the flat lands of central Illinois, she continues to appreciate and photograph beautiful forms in nature. She is also the Newsletter Editor of the Central Illinois Audubon Society, and she teaches part time at Illinois State University's Laboratory Schools. The photograph featured on the cover was taken at Dawson Lake, about 15 miles east of Bloomington, during a glorious fall afternoon. This spot at Dawson Lake is one of her favorite meditation sites.

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Letter from the President/Carta de la presidenta

December 2005

Queridas/os Socias/os de Feministas Unidas

The day after a delightful meal shared with friends and family, I sit in front of my laptop clearing my throat, hoping to shake off a week-long cold, and watching it snow outside. It is November 25, 2005, and we are expecting 6 to 9 inches of snow in Buffalo, while my sister in El Paso, Texas tells me that again, like on Thanksgiving Day, it is 67 degrees outside. Yes, I knew what I was getting into when, 20 years ago, I accepted my first job out of graduate school and, despite the weather; there are no regrets.

After the above prelude, I would like to thank all those of you who submitted abstracts for the Special Issue of Letras Femeninas that Beth Jorgensen and I are co-editing in celebration of our organization's 25th Anniversary. It was very exciting to read excerpts of the varied and excellent scholarship of the members of Feministas Unidas. We had numerous submissions, which made our job fun and challenging, but ultimately difficult, because we had to choose only a few amongst many exceptional proposals.

Also, I would like to thank you for having given me the opportunity to serve as Vice-President and as President of this prestigious organization. It has allowed me to be in touch with many of you and to recognize your names as members of FU whenever I see bibliographical references to your scholarship or when I am looking on the web for information regarding some author or another and come across your names associated with courses similar to the ones I teach and in which you are using the same textbook.

Even though we don't have too many opportunities to meet in person, the internet has enabled us to stay connected. I was amazed at the responses I received to a question I posed regarding novels that dealt with mother/daughter relationships. People's willingness to share their knowledge and research demonstrated a true spirit of camaraderie. For this I am indebted to you.

I extend a cordial invitation to all those planning to attend the MLA convention in Washington, D. C. to join me at the Churchill Hotel for our annual meeting, which will be held at 6:30 p.m., on December 28, prior to the Presidential Address. Please come prepared with suggestions for topics for FU's 2006 MLA sessions: one on feminist pedagogy and the other on one of the fields in our respective areas of study.

As I am stepping out of my role as President, I would like to encourage us to continue promoting the spirit of collaboration and solidarity that guides Feministas Unidas.

Finally, I would like to welcome Carmen de Urioste, who will serve as our fearless leader for the next two years, and hope that she enjoys her tenure as much as I enjoyed mine. The baton of this continued relay is now yours. May most of us be around to celebrate our organization's 50th Anniversary.

Best,
Margarita Vargas, President of Feministas Unidas

Letter from the Editor/Carta de la editora

Diciembre 2005

Queridas/os colegas:

Como por arte de magia aquí está el número de diciembre del boletín de *Feministas Unidas*. Digo por arte de magia porque realmente he tenido un semestre tan liado que preparar el boletín para enviarlo a prensa ha sido un placer inesperado en medio de la locura de las últimas semanas del semestre. Tengo que agradecer enormemente a mi estudiante y fiel asistenta Jessica Jones por su buen ojo artístico y paciencia con mi *particular* estilo de dirección. También a la oficina del *Dean and Provost* y a *Printing Services* de Illinois Wesleyan University, universidad donde trabajo desde hace más de diez años, por su generosidad y apoyo con este proyecto editorial. Espero que os guste y pido perdón por si me he olvidado de incluir algún documento que debiera haber estado en este número.

Este año en el congreso de MLA en Washington D.C. habrá dos sesiones organizadas por *Feministas Unidas*. Incluídos en este número del boletín están copias de los ensayos que se presentarán en la sesión *Bluring Borders: Theorizing Gloria Anzaldúa* (10:15-11:30 a.m., Edison, Washington Hilton). Gracias a Sara E. Cooper por organizar un panel interesante sobre la teoría *borderland* de Gloria Anzaldúa. Copias electrónicas de los ensayos de la otra sesión de MLA, *Real Women Have...: Teaching the Visual,* se pueden obtener en la página web www.asu.edu/languages/femunida/d04/index.htm Felicidades y suerte a todos los ponentes en el MLA.

Para el número de mayo de 2006, por favor enviadme una copia electrónica de documentos, reseñas, noticias, publicaciones y demás, directamente a mi correo electrónico cferrada@iwu.edu Tengo que decir que no he tenido tiempo de actualizar la página web de nuestra organización, o sea que de momento sigue siendo la misma dirección que en el pasado.

Mucha suerte con el trabajo de fin de curso y que tengáis unas vacaciones estupendas y relajadas.

Un abrazo,

Carmela

Feministas Unidas Essay Prize

The Executive Committee of Feministas Unidas, an allied organization of the MLA, is pleased to announce a call for papers for the Fifth Annual Feministas Unidas Essay Prize competition for scholars in the early stage of their career. The Feministas Unidas Essay Prize is awarded for an outstanding unpublished essay of feminist scholarship on women writers in the areas covered by our organization's mission: Spanish, Spanish-American, Luso-Brazilian, Afro-Latin American, and U.S. Hispanic Studies.

The purpose of the essay prize is to promote feminist scholarship on women writers by those who are entering our profession or who are in the early stages of their professional career. The prize is the product of collaboration between Feministas Unidas and the Asociación Internacional de Literatura Femenina Hispánica. The selection committee is drawn from officers and members of Feministas Unidas and the editorial board of *Letras Femeninas*. Feministas Unidas reserves the right not to award the prize in a given year.

AWARD: $200 and publication of the essay in the December issue of the journal *Letras Femeninas*. The author of the winning essay must be a member of the Asociación de Literatura Femenina Hispánica at the time of publication of the essay.

ELIGIBILITY: Graduate students, instructors, lecturers and untenured assistant professors who are current or new members of Feministas Unidas are eligible to submit their original research for the prize.

GUIDELINES:

- An unpublished paper completed in the year 2005
- Length: 18-25 pages, double-spaced, including notes and works cited
- Format: MLA style. Prepare the manuscript according to instructions for "Anonymous Submissions"
- Languages: Spanish or English
- Deadline for submission: February 15, 2006
- Announcement of award: April 15, 2006

ITEMS TO BE SUBMITTED:

- Essay
- 200-word abstract of the essay
- Author's c.v.
- Submit all materials in the following ways: **one hard copy and as an e-mail attachment**

MAIL TO:

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Feministas Unidas at the MLA

Wednesday, 28 December

156. Blurring Borders: Theorizing Gloria Anzaldúa

10:15–11:30 a.m., Edison, Washington Hilton

Program arranged by the Feministas Unidas

Presiding: Sara E. Cooper, California State Univ., Chico

1. "Revolutionizing Contemporary Theories: Anzaldúa's Politics of Spirit," Ana Louise Keating, Texas Woman's Univ.

2. "Gloria Anzaldúa's 'New Mestiza' and Her Sisters: Language, Resistance, and Female Identity," Cristina Ferreira-Pinto, Independent Scholar.

3. "Gloria Anzaldúa and Involutionary Queer Theory," Mikko J. Tuhkanen, East Carolina Univ.

4. "Mourning Gloria: Moving beyond the Body's Borders in the Wake of Anzaldúa's Death," Suzanne M. Bost, Southern Methodist Univ.

Friday, 30 December

752. Real Women Have . . .: Teaching the Visual

1:45–3:00 p.m., Independence, Washington Hilton

Program arranged by the Feministas Unidas

Presiding: Maria Elena Soliño, Univ. Of Houston, University Park

1. "Latinas, Sex, and the City: From *Real Women Have Curves* to *Maria Full of Grace,*" Juanita Isabel Heredia, Northern Arizona Univ.

2. "Magazines, Newspapers, and Prime Time: How to Use Print and Visual Media in the Classroom," Emma Ruth García, Colby Coll.

3. "Beyond Frida: Enriching a Postmodern Literature Course with Art by Spanish American Women," Joanna R. Bartow, Saint Mary's Coll. of Maryland

For copies of papers, visit www.asu.edu/languages/femunida/d04/index.htm

MLA 2005 Conference Papers

Mourning Gloria:
Feeling beyond the Body's Borders in the Wake of Anzaldúa's Death

Suzanne Bost
Southern Methodist University

The works of Gloria Anzaldúa have redrawn the contours of critical thinking about borders, *mestizaje*, feminism, lesbianism, and Chicana/o identity politics. Now that her death has shifted the center of discussions about her, at least for the moment, these discussions are more personal, more intimate, more *feeling* than before. The passionate mourning that has followed her death shows how her lifework is itself an "open wound" (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 3) that still bleeds into those who have incorporated her ideas and the strength of her rebellion. In a 2004 memorial tribute, Alicia Gaspar de Alba suggested that Anzaldúa is physically linked to her mourners: "Her passing is extremely personal and painful to me (as it is, I'm sure to many of us), and feels like a loss of a higher part of myself" (*Rest in Peace Gloria* 2004). Of course, mourning as a genre involves emotional revelation, but the mourning following Anzaldúa's death is also strikingly corporeal. Inés Hernández-Ávila, for instance, describes her grief as a gradual embodiment of Anzaldúa's absence: "My body is reluctantly registering in every cell that you are physically no longer with us" (qtd. in Gonzales and Rodriquez). This interpersonal feeling has origins in an aspect of Anzaldúa's work whose critical impact has yet to be fully explored: the ways in which pain and illness open bodies beyond individual boundaries. Illness leads to affective and intersubjective forms of identification through corporeal transformation, medical intervention, and care-giving. Anzaldúa's death should lead us to think more seriously about the influence of illness on the shape of identity.

I believe that diabetes reinforced her thinking about the open and shifting *conciencia* of *mestiza* feminism. In her 2002 essay, "now let us shift," for instance, Anzaldúa proposed a revolution in the way we think about identity, following a passage in which she describes her gradual acceptance of diabetes as a new embodiment: "you've chosen to compose a new history and self.... Your ailing body is no longer a hindrance but an asset, witnessing pain, speaking to you, demanding touch. Es tu cuerpo que busca conocimiento; along with dreams your body's the royal road to consciousness" (Anzaldúa, "now let us shift" 558-59). Anzaldúa's "ailing body" opened new avenues of perception and new ways of being in the world. In order to understand her work, I argue, we must take seriously the perspective offered by her illness and the avenues of thought down which it led her. Using the lenses of Feminist and Disability Studies, this talk will analyze Anzaldúa's writings alongside the devotional responses that have followed her death in order to trace the new sorts of identification, openness, and "touch" enabled by her unique epistemology.

Identity, for Anzaldúa, has always strained against boundaries. Though she is consistently associated with identity labels – Chicana, *mestiza*, lesbian, feminist – she consistently resisted identity labels. As AnaLouise Keating writes in a recent memorial

tribute, "Anzaldúa refused to be contained within any single group or location. At great personal risk, she exposed the limitations in the labels and the flaws in the various forms of group-think on which such labels rely" (Keating 18). It is not my intent then to claim Anzaldúa as a "disabled" writer, which would simply add to the freight-train of labels already attached to her memory. Rather, I propose that there is a theoretical affinity between recent works in Disability Studies – what Lennard Davis calls the "second wave" of Disability criticism – and the recent moves in Anzaldúa's thinking about identity. In what has now become a point of departure for many critical discussions of identity politics, Wendy Brown's *States of Injury* argues that identity politics lead to an "excessively local" understanding of the individual (Brown 49) and falsely assume "clean, sharply bounded, disembodied, [and] permanent" understandings of identity. She proposes, instead, that politics work from "a vision about the common ('what I want for us') rather than from identity ('who I am')" (51). Identity is nostalgic, isolating, and, if not conservative, at least preservative and invested in bodily differentiation. Wanting, in contrast, strains forward, focuses on particular embodied feelings, and crosses boundaries between sedimented identity categories. Davis suggests that the "malleable and shaky foundation" of the "disabled" identity category "can be the beginning of an entirely new way of thinking about identity categories" (Davis 5). Though the category "disabled" has successfully organized demands for equal access, it refers to a nearly incoherent collectivity of visible and invisible, permanent and temporary, physical and mental, genetic and trauma-induced conditions. Rather than targeting sociopolitical markings like femaleness, blackness, or deafness as that which determines "ablement," disability politics have focused on the social structures that limit various kinds of access, mobility, and communication. This approach potentially uncovers the ways in which we all need some care and assistance – medications, prostheses, vehicles for transportation – thereby debunking the mythic autonomous subject. As Davis suggests, "all groups, based on physical traits or markings, are selected for disablement by a larger system of regulation and signification" (29). Rather than seeking inclusion within a norm or defending the borders of difference, second wave disability politics are oriented towards particularly embodied needs. This is not to suggest that people with disabilities are naturally progressive in their politics but that the heterogeneity that lies behind the explanatory framework of "disability" offers powerful lessons for all political movement.

In Anzaldúa's earlier writings the contradictions between identity politics and embodied individuality remain unresolved, in painful tension. In her poem "*Cihuatlyotl*, Woman Alone," included in *Borderlands*, she describes her ambivalent relationship to Chicano identity politics in terms of dismemberment to reflect the difficulty of fitting embodied experience into constructed racial types:

> And as I grew you hacked away
> at the pieces of me that were different….
> Oh, it was hard,
> *Raza* to cleave flesh from flesh I risked
> us both bleeding to death….
> …there's no-
> thing more you can chop off or graft on me that
> will change my soul. I remain who I am, multiple
> and one of the herd, yet not of it. (*Borderlands* 173)

Even within a racially mixed identity like *la raza Chicana*, individual bodies always contain differences that exceed the *raza* ideal: "deviant" embodiments must be "hacked away," and missing "essential traits" must be grafted on. In the process of self-definition, Chicano politics amputated parts that are perhaps feminist, lesbian, or sick. Yet, Anzaldúa insists, where individual difference is censored by communal identity politics, she remains "multiple," apart, "on the ground of my own being" (173). The spacing in this poem emphasizes rupture. She inserts gaps both before and after "of me," making the phrase stand out from the line with individual visibility, independence, and integrity, but the speaker is both "of" and "not of" the herd. Sustaining this contradiction, as Anzaldúa has, breaks down the opposition between individual embodiment and communal politics, identifying with *la raza* without relinquishing that which exceeds *la raza*.[i] "*Cihuatlyotl*" invests individual identity with contamination by others: "I am fully formed carved/ by the hands of ancients, drenched with/ the stench of today's headlines. But my own/ hands whittle the final work me" (173). Though she is "fully formed," being subject to "today's headlines," in the present tense, keeps her fully open to revision, too. This identity goes beyond the corporeal borders we conventionally assume to bind it.

Fifteen years after *Borderlands*, in her essay, "now let us shift," Anzaldúa broke more radically with the subjects of feminist and Chicano politics. She advocated the critical use of the spirit, the soul, and the body to form "less-structured thoughts, less-rigid categorizations," crossing beyond bodies and academic boundaries in order to exceed the status quo ("now let us shift" 568, 570). In my interpretation, these boundary crossings emerge not just from the Texas/Mexico borderlands where she grew up: they also reflect the experience of someone who is sick, who must continually submit her body to medical examinations, needles, and pharmaceuticals. Anzaldúa explains in her interviews that diabetes "descompuso todo" (*Interviews* 249): "No matter how well you're taking care of yourself, no matter how controlled your diabetes is, there's always that percent that's failing" (290). Diabetes keeps the body from stasis, and a diabetic cannot maintain firm boundaries. Since her body needed the dominant culture's technology – blood sugar tests, insulin injections – Anzaldúa ultimately let go of traditional identity politics to form new kinds of couplings, borrowing "Beliefs and values from the wisdom of past spiritual traditions of diverse cultures coupled with current scientific knowledge" to form a new "synthesis" (561).

Ultimately, Anzaldúa proposed what she called "a new tribalism" as an alternative to identity politics. She begins this discussion with the familiar image of roots, but these roots are not metaphors for racial ancestry: "Your identity has roots you share with all people and other beings--spirit, feeling, and body make up a greater identity category…. The roots del árbol de la vida of all planetary beings are nature, soul, body" (560). Identity, here, is not just "the body." It is a web made up of interpersonal feelings, shared embodiments, spiritual filiations, and connections to material environments. If at times this proposal to "rethink yourself in more global-spiritual terms instead of conventional categories of color, class, career" seems to be hopelessly forging politics from ether, Anzaldúa consistently brings it back to practical matter: "In this narrative national boundaries dividing us from the 'others' (nos/otras) are porous and the cracks between worlds serve as gateways" (561). Using the very material language of "pores" and "cracks" turns our attention to the actual places where "worlds" and "bodies" meet and

the actual occasions that break the tissues of our boundaries. Diabetes forced Anzaldúa to accept identity that is "not contained by your skin," that "occurs by widening the psyche/body's borders." She saw her "wounds as openings to become vulnerable and available (present) to others" (555, 571-72). The language imposed by illness provides an alternate metaphor for politics based on interpersonal connections rather than bounded identities.

Corporeal vulnerability, fluctuation, and pain are radical to the ideals of Western modernity and have been purged from healthy adult selfhood. According to Linda Singer's *Erotic Welfare: Sexual Politics in the Age of Epidemic*, in the wake of AIDS the "logic of contagion" draws firm boundaries between people to prevent infection, quarantining "at risk" groups with cultural stigmas and marginalization. "Communication has become communicability; access is now figured as an occasion for transmission and contagion" (Singer 28). Disability studies must circulate differently, opening access and expanding the shape of health. Rather than striving for an impossible prophylaxis between bodies, feminist disability scholars like Nancy Mairs, Janet Price, and Margrit Shildrick have reframed interpersonal contact as an occasion for care-giving, feeling, and transmitting knowledge. Mairs writes that one of the more complicated understandings she developed with her multiple sclerosis is that "actively nurturing your fellow creatures… develops and disciplines that… part of the human psyche that transcends self-interest," and she mourns the "normals'" lack of disability "to deepen and complicate their understanding of the world" (Mairs 72, 78). Disability uncovers social and topographical barriers, solicits care from others, and challenges the ideal of "self-reliance."[ii]

Analysis of disability exposes the unpredictability and tenuousness of embodiment as well as the constructedness of medical norms and the cultural contexts that privilege these norms. In their essay "Bodies Together: Touch, Ethics, and Disability," Price and Shildrick note how people are led to reflect on their own vulnerability when they interact with the disabled. Writing of their own experiences with disability and caregiving, they comment:

> [W]hat was uncovered during that acute period of Janet's illness [multiple sclerosis] was that, through the mutuality and reversibility of touch, we are in a continual process of mutual reconstitution of our embodied selves. Moreover, the instability of the disabled body is but an extreme instance of the instability of all bodies. (Price and Shildrick 72)

I would argue that Anzaldúa's illness and death have stimulated a similar sort of reflection about corporeal instability. Rather than reifying bodies or identities as stable foundations, Anzaldúa has asked us to acknowledge our dependence upon others. In a 1996 interview with Andrea Lunsford, she explained, "The future belongs to those who cultivate cultural sensitivities to differences and who use these abilities to forge a hybrid consciousness that transcends the 'us' versus 'them' mentality and will carry us into a nosotras position bridging the extremes of our cultural realities" (*Interviews* 255). Though "navigating the cracks between the worlds is difficult and painful,… both are necessary to our survival and growth" (255). Leela Fernandes' *Transforming Feminist Practice* (2003), a book Anzaldúa called "indispensable… for activistas and thinkers" (Fernandes back cover), similarly insists that feminists must let go of their search for "a place of safety" and operate instead from "a place of risk" and continual

"disidentification" (34). Fernandes defines "disidentification as a process of letting go not just of external social identities but of various forms of often invisible ego-based attachments" (35). In order to avoid violence and competition, Fernandes argues that we must continually reject the ego and open our identities to the world around us.

I propose that letting go of "external social identities" is the logical conclusion to the *mestiza* consciousness outlined by Anzaldúa in the 1980s, a continual process of self-examination and synthesis in which "nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned" (*Borderlands* 79). The surge of mourning following her death has outed the different populations her work has spoken to. I end with an analysis of one example of feeling beyond borders: an online altar constructed between May and October, 2004, called *Rest in Peace Gloria*. The mourners here are male, female, and transgender. Though a majority self-identify as Chicana, they are also Cuban, Mexican, Guatemalan, Native American, white, Hawaiian, Chinese, Jewish/Southern Baptist, Sri Lankan/Eastern European, and racially unidentified. They are academics, students, activists, writers, editors, bookstore owners, farm-workers, travelers, and diabetics. Almost all of the entries include the cities from which they were written, spanning the globe. In her entry, Elga J. Martinez notes that, "Even after your death you are still building communities…look at us…from up there…how many are being connected through your passing away." Martinez goes on to outline movements for social justice that "always include people like you and I at the centre," but the altar itself defies putting any identity--any "like us"--at the center. Though all of these voices come together to mourn Gloria, the processes of this mourning are disordered, unregulated, and often contradictory. True to Anzaldúa's proposal in *Borderlands* that "we can no longer let defenses and fences sprout around us" (88), her mourners expand beyond the boundaries of her texts and "stretch" beyond "habitual formations" to "a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes" (79).

The mourners, with all of their different investments in Anzaldúa's work, produce statements that are libratory across borders.[iii] Beatriz Lopez-Flores eulogizes her as "a truly remarkable woman with the clarity of vision of a Dolores Huerta, the kindness of an internationalist that practiced her beliefs as a fighter for equality, love, and respect." Erin Fairchild credits Anzaldúa for showing her that anti-oppression work "is to have a heart larger and more fierce than any of the systems that would work to shatter our compassions." And Ellie Hernandez claims that *mestiza* consciousness "is really about transcendent love": Anzaldúa's "love of women of color, of poor working class women and of queers." This is a risky, open-armed sort of politics.

Anzaldúa's political subject unravels at the online altar through an unfurling series of divergent responses, conflicting interpretations, personal revelations, feelings, and memories. The political messages that emerge at the altar are based on particularity rather than assumed consensus. It is invigorating to read all of the unlikely connections that are forged by those who mourn Anzaldúa. The Rain and Thunder Collective of Oakland "sent support and strength and love and revolution" to all of the mourners at the site, while others prayed or dedicated their dissertations to Anzaldúa, forming a new tribalist network of care. The online altar invites reciprocal meditation about "injury" without requiring identification based on that injury, forming a community that is not a community in any traditional sense. Like disability, illness, and death, mourning does not obey the boundaries between sociopolitical categories. The mourners' alliance is

based on shared feelings of loss, shared devotion to Anzaldúa, and shared virtual space. This sense of community maintains the friction between different experiences of mourning, and this friction is one of the most palpable qualities of the website. Finally, mourning inheres in bodies in a peculiar way: it lies *between* bodies, where one cares for, misses, or identifies with another. It is always interpersonal. "Here we are," Anzaldúa wrote in 1987, "weaponless with open arms" (88). Perhaps open arms are the most disarming weapon of all.

Notes

[i] Elsewhere Anzaldúa engenders this compromise within Chicana feminism: "in *nos/otras* we are them and they are us and we're contaminated by each other." "*Nos/otras*" reflects this "contamination" by splitting the plural feminine we down the middle--fragmenting the subject of Chicana feminism--and by using the backslash simultaneously to divide and to fuse "us" and "them" (*Interviews* 11).

[ii] Rosemarie Garland Thomson notes how Emerson's "naturalized man" and "American ideal" are "profoundly threatened by what Richard Selzer has called the 'mortal lessons' that disability represents": "The four interrelated ideological principles that inform this normate self might be characterized as self-government, self-determination, autonomy, and progress…. However, these four principles depend upon a body that is a stable, neutral instrument of the individual will. It is this fantasy that the disabled figure troubles" (Thomson 42).

[iii] An anonymous biological male who "never enjoyed self-identifying as a 'man'" remembers Anzaldúa this way: "The problem, you wrote, is the system of ideologies that cleave apart our lives and bodies, that creates 'the other,' that demands we see everything in terms of irreconcilable opposites, that began the splitting of the world and is paving the highways of this path to world annihilation" (*Rest in Peace Gloria*). The "other," in this account, is not clearly sexed; in fact, sex is part of the problem of this particular "othering." Rather than limiting its focus to those identified as women, this anonymous entry (probably an interpretation of Anzaldúa's figure of the "Shadow-Beast") critiques any system that forces bodies into limiting frameworks and that splits materiality into binaries. Beyond Simone de Beauvoir's insights about otherness, the Shadow-Beast is unpredictable, trans-human, shadowing more than just sex or race. Anzaldúa calls it the "rebel in me," the projection of heterosexual males that falls into "nightmarish pieces," rather than simply raced or sexed forms. One can see either "lust for power and destruction" or "tenderness" in its face (*Borderlands* 16-17, 20). The otherness of this creature embodies a simultaneity of political positions that accompanies the simultaneity of oppressions. This is not *just* a Chicana *mestiza* lesbian feminist insight, but it is that, too.

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Gloria Anzaldúa's "New *Mestiza*" and her Sisters:
Language, Resistance, and Female Identity

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Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La frontera: The New Mestiza* has had a tremendous impact not only in Border studies and Chicano/a studies, but in other fields as well. It certainly resonates in Brazilian literary and cultural studies, as Brazil has been described as a country "at the borders of Western culture." In *Borderlands* and other writings, Anzaldúa has stressed that "alterity is power" (Saldívar-Hull 5); in this paper I want to explore some aspects of her work that find an echo in writings by Afro-Brazilian and Native Brazilian women writers who have made similar claims to their alterity as a source of self-empowerment. I will refer here briefly to the work of some Afro-Brazilian writers, and will focus my discussion on Native Brazilian Eliane Potiguara. The poems I discuss here may be found at the end of the paper.

One aspect I want to focus on is the representation of the New *Mestiza* identity as solidly "grounded in the Indian woman's history of resistance" (Anzaldúa *Borderlands* 43). Anzaldúa retraces a historical female lineage that goes back to Coatlicue. Talking to Ana Louise Keating in "Writing, Politics, and las Lesberadas," she discusses this digging "into the past for a history and models and women and stories that can give us some sort of ground to walk on, . . . some sort of place to take off from" (Anzaldúa in Keating 127). Anzaldúa chooses to embrace a female heritage that lies beyond an immediate cultural and literary tradition marked by Eurocentric thought. The space Coatlicue inhabits is a space above time and national boundaries; her rage is the rage shared by female deities from other cultural traditions, and in this way Coatlicue speaks a language that can be understood by women in different cultural situations. Likewise, Anzaldúa's discourse crosses national and cultural borders, and is able to dialogue with women who speak/write from other sites.

In "Una carta a escritoras tercermundistas" (1980), Anzaldúa describes herself handwriting a letter, while imagining her addressee—"la escritora tercermundista" — engaged in the same activity of writing: "miro de fijo mi mano morena agarrada de la pluma y pienso en ti, miles de millas de aquí agarrada de tu pluma" ("Carta" 223). This mirror image of two women writing visually establishes the deep connection between women, the sisterhood—the "familia, esta comunidad de escritoras" ("Carta" 225)—whom she calls to action and to unity in her letter. Anzaldúa's immediate addressee may be the community of "mujeres tercermundistas" in the United States: Afro-American, Chicana, Native American, and Asian American women. However, the letter speaks too to women of color in other countries, "mujeres tercermundistas" in Third World countries such as Brazil, and who, like Anzaldúa's "New Mestiza," live in the Borderlands, struggling to reconcile the different cultural realities they inhabit and, ultimately, to affirm their alterity as the solid ground from which to speak.

Afro-Brazilian writers Miriam Alves, Alzira Rufino and Esmeralda Ribeiro, and Native-Brazilian Eliane Potiguara are some authors who have called upon other Brazilian women of color to write in order to affirm themselves as agents rather than objects of the

hegemonic discourse. Examining some of their poetic and narrative writings vis-à-vis that of Anzaldúa, it becomes apparent that the New Mestiza's sisterhood extends into other borders. It is not necessarily a matter of direct influence, but of shared goals and politics. Their immediate political struggles may be different, however they occupy a common space defined by an "oppositional consciousness," to use Chela Sandoval's expression, an "espacio trans," in the words of Michelle Joffroy, who explains it as "el sitio de la actualización de una práctica feminista radicada en las alianzas múltiples y variables forjadas a base de experiencias comunes compartidas" (803).

Afro-Brazilian women writers articulate through their poetry a *process* of re-creation of female identities much alike the "*travesía*" undertook by Anzaldúa's *mestiza*, a process that entails the deconstruction of myths of femininity created by the hegemonic culture, and that leads to a new consciousness. Like the "New *Mestiza*," the female subject that speaks in poems by Afro-Brazilian women comes to being as a result of a long identity-building process made out of rejection and affirmation; a dialectical process we witness in *Borderlands*. There, following the initial rejection of one's own self, the female voice speaks of the rejection of limits, barriers, and borders imposed on the self by the dominant society. *Alien*, then, becomes one's identity, leading to feelings of displacement, of discomfort with oneself, and even of non-existence.

Thus the Afro-Brazilian female voice experiences an initial self-rejection, as she is faced with the negative images imposed upon her by a Eurocentric culture. As in the case of the Chicana, this image imposed from without has the power to efface the self within, producing alienation. This, in turn, elicits a need for self-defense, a fierce struggle for the survival of the self. In Geni Guimarães's "Constatação" too the poetic voices faces a violent conflict, a kind of psychosocial schizophrenia wherein the I struggles against the I, in an attempt to undo that negative image (quote 1).[iv]

This struggle causes a fragmentation of the self, but it is from these fragmented pieces that Afro-Brazilian women are able to reconstruct a new female identity, bringing together her fragmented pieces and valuing what is most authentic in them. Like the New Mestiza, then, the female voices that emerge in the poetry of Afro-Brazilian women writers move from self-rejection to self-acceptance and self-empowerment. And as Anzaldúa finds empowerment in pre-Hispanic and pre-Aztec goddesses, Geni Guimarães, Miriam Alves, Esmeralda Ribeiro, and others find empowerment in an Afro-Brazilian cultural heritage, evoking a female tradition of fight and resistance, as in Alzira Rufino's "Luiza Mahin" and in Celinha's "Resistência," or taking pride in those attributes or characteristics that mark their Blackness, as in Rufino's "Resgate" (quote 2).

Conscious of the quasi-total absence of authentic images of Black women in Brazilian literature, these writers recognize the importance of self-definition through language and writing, and call on other Afro-Brazilian women to do the same. Moreover, they are aware that their individual struggles to achieve self-definition and self-realization are part of a larger picture of oppression that transcends national borders. In this way, many are the poems by Afro-Brazilian women that speak about the reality and the struggle of others, such as Celinha's "Um sol guerreiro" (A warrior sun), subtitled "A todas as crianças negras assassinadas em Atlanta e a muitas outras crianças assassinadas todos os dias no ventre do mundo" (To all the Black children murdered in Atlanta and to many other children murdered everyday in the world's womb).

Eliane Potiguara shares much of Afro-Brazilian women writers' struggles and goals. Even though Potiguara privileges her indigenous heritage and claims the indigenous nation to which she belongs (the Potyguara nation) as the defining element of her identity, she also identifies with Afro-Brazilian culture. For Potiguara, indigenous peoples and Afro-Brazilians, as well as women, children, and *campesinos*, share a common plight of oppression and exploitation, as she writes in her 1989 essay "A terra é a mãe do índio" (Earth is the mother of indigenous peoples).

Potiguara's political activism and literary work seek to refute the kind of stereotypes that have portrayed Native Brazilians as childlike, "incompetent" or "useless" (Potiguara, "Earth" 144). Her most recent book, *Metade cara, metade máscara* (Half face, half mask), published in 2004 as the first volume in the series "Visões Indígenas" (Indigenous Perspectives), is a polyphonic text whose underlining premise is the "close connection between identity and alterity" (Graúna 17). Throughout the book she affirms a "identidade diferenciada," and she also defends in her political activism Native Brazilians' right to an "educação diferenciada," one that will not erase, but rather strengthen, the alterity of indigenous people as a source of empowerment.

Metade cara, metade máscara shows some compelling similarities to Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*, particularly in the way both authors blend different literary genres and different linguistic registers in order to give shape to female identities. In *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa uses various forms of discourse that we have traditionally identified as distinct: essayistic narrative, autobiography, poetic prose, and poetry. As the author has said, ". . . Chicanas and women of color write not only about abstract ideas but also bring in their personal history as well as the history of their community" (Anzaldúa, "Writing" 242); it's what Anzaldúa calls "autohisteorías" ("Writing" 242). Anzaldúa's multi-dimensional discourse is consistent with the multi-dimensional identity of the "New *Mestiza*." Reflecting the multiple dimensions of her identity, Potiguara's writings show a similar blend of discourses. This is especially apparent in *Metade cara*, in which Potiguara makes use of storytelling, poetry, chants, autobiography, sociological study, and testimony. The tone employed varies as well: it is poetic, lyrical, objective, and combative. Potiguara has commented on how traditional literary criticism sees her work: "for the bourgeois literature, I mix prose and poetry. I mix truth and [personal] reaction; history and lament; the indigenous life and voice, the struggle for survival" (in Graúna 18; my translation). The variety of linguistic and literary registers she is able to use reflects both her standing in the crossroads of Brazil's culture and society, and the multi-dimensional identity she claims, as an Indigenous woman, of the Indian nation Potyguara, born in Brazil, living in Rio de Janeiro, an intellectual, poet, professor of literature, mother of three children, and political activist, just to mention some of the many facets of who she is.

In her writings, Potiguara has also spoken of alienation, displacement and fragmentation. For example, in the poem "Brazil" she writes, "Que faço com a minha cara de índia?" [What should I do with my Indian face?"] (quote 3). The poetic voice here displays a sense of inadequacy and the fear of confronting her own face/her own identity, feelings described also by Anzaldúa and by some of the Afro-Brazilian women I have discussed above.

A fundamental issue in Potiguara's writings, and which orients her political activism, is the displacement Native Brazilians have endured through centuries, as they

were expelled from their lands, first by the colonizer, and now by the neo-colonizing interests of landowners, loggers and corporations. According to the author, the initial expulsion of Native Americans by Europeans beginning in the sixteenth century led to the history of migration of the indigenous peoples, a history that includes her family. This and other situations of the national and international indigenous movement constitute the narrative line of *Metade cara, metade máscara*, and the protagonists, Cunhataí and Jurupiranga, illustrate the plight of indigenous people everywhere.

The narrative centers on the story of Cunhataí, a young Indian woman, and her journey—her "travesía"—to find her male lover Jurupiranga. Despite what one critic has said, the protagonist is Cunhataí and not her male counterpart, which reflects the author's belief in women's "role in the construction of a new man/new woman in Brazilian society" (Interview in *Partes*). Potiguara's ecofeminism links indigenous women and their ancestral knowledge to the well being of the environment and all living beings.

Displaced from their land, indigenous people find themselves disconnected from their past and their ancestors; this, says Potiguara, leads to their "cultural and spiritual disintegration" (*Metade cara* 24; my translation). *Metade cara* represents an attempt to reconnect with this past, but also with the present and the future, with her children, and with other Native Brazilian women who live and will live experiences similar to hers. The female lineage that women writers so often search for is very clearly established in Potiguara's book, and includes real, fictional, and mythical women. In fact, one of its early chapters is titled "Similaridade de histórias" (Similarity of Stories/Histories). There is a succession of women who are given the role of protagonist in the book: Cunhataí, the fictional protagonist; Maria de Lourdes, Potiguara's grandmother, whose story is initially narrated in a tone of legend or fable; Elza, Maria de Lourdes's daughter, whose husband is killed in an accident in the big city; Elza's daughter, Potiguara herself, who is not named in the text, raised by Maria de Lourdes and many great-aunts; and the many and anonymous indigenous women, also displaced and also left without a husband. In this way the book's protagonist is not one single woman, but rather many women who share a common fate. The story therefore transcends chronological, geographical and national borders, just as Potiguara's struggle is transnational.

Potiguara stresses that the displacement and migration of America's indigenous peoples has caused "indigenous women's loneliness and suffering" (Interview with Baldessin 1). Women, land, and identity are deeply connected in Potiguara's thought, and women are the link between new generations and the knowledge, wisdom and traditions of the ancestors. From their ancestral history and knowledge emerges women's power, a power that has been repressed by the hegemonic culture (*Metade cara* 46). Says Potiguara in *Metade cara*: "the liberation of indigenous people depends radically on female culture, spirituality, and cosmovision" (46; my translation). Thus the alienation and suffering of indigenous women have meant the loss of identity for entire nations. It is no coincidence then that Potiguara's political and literary work focuses a great deal on women, on their education and empowerment. Her literature is, in her own words, an "ideological instrument" and "an instrument for consciousness raising" (Interview with Baldessin 3). Like Anzaldúa, Potiguara uses her writings to call upon women to create, because she recognizes in the creative act, in language and in writing the possibility of change (*Metade cara* 58). Anzaldúa concurs; talking about women writers of color in the

US, she states: "We're reclaiming the agency of reinscribing . . . ourselves, our own identities, our own cultures" (Anzaldúa, "From Victimhood" 189).

The succession of female voices in *Metade cara* underscores a shared path—*travesía*—of oppression, displacement and alienation, but also of resistance. This path crosses over geopolitical borders, bringing women together in a common space of transnational feminisms that writing and political activism build. Nevertheless, in spite of a common ground and of their urging other women to also join in the *travesía*, each woman's viewpoint is unique, as it results from a particular set of circumstances. Just as there has been some criticism that Anzaldúa's call to action does not serve those who cross daily from Mexico into the U.S., Potiguara's ecofeminism may be seen as essentialist, given the role women are ascribed: they represent Earth and the ancestral knowledge; they are the "wild self, the spiritual strength" (Potiguara, interview in *Partes*). As the "Coatlicue state" in Anzaldúa, Potiguara's "wild self" is a force for change. In a sense, the Brazilian writer is also arguing for a reconnection with the Goddess as a first step in the resistance against the hegemonic culture, against "consumerism, 'imediatismo' (immediateness), and centuries of social and racial exclusion" (Potiguara, interview in *Partes*).

But the Goddess is not uni-dimensional; she is not only the nurturer and keeper of humanity. Either as Coatlicue or as Native Brazilians' "wild self" she both "hurts" and "heals" (Anzaldúa *Borderlands* 68). She is also the warrior, rebellious, enraged. And here is an important aspect these writers share through their writings: a poetics of rage. The rage Anzaldúa infuses in poems such as "*Cihuatlyotl*, Woman Alone" (*Borderlands* 195), and that Potiguara claims unabashedly in "Consciência Tikuna" (Tikuna Consciousness) (quote 4), or in the short poem "Sepé Tiaraju" (quote 5).

Either with a machine gun or with the claws of a rabid dog, Potiguara enacts a process of destruction and reconstruction similar to what Anzaldúa, Miriam Alves, Esmeralda Ribeiro and other Afro-Brazilian women poets do through their writings. Not only deconstructing false identities imposed upon them by the dominant culture and reconstructing a new self-identity, they urge the destruction of the obstacles, barriers, iron gates, and miles-long walls. Claiming the borderlands as their own, they propose nevertheless that the borders be torn down, so their voices will rise free and strong in their alterity.

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QUOTE 1: "Constatação" ("Authentication")

Quando se viu,	When she saw herself
quis voltar	she wanted to turn away
esconder-se	to hide herself
sumir-se	to disappear
anular.	to deny.
Tanto fez para desfazer,	She did so much to undo,
tanto sangrou pra não sangrar	she bled so much not to bleed,
tanto aspirou,	she aspired,
cuspiu	she spat,
bebeu,	she drank,
se deu, lutou,	she dedicated herself, she struggled,
que ao se vencer, se amou.	so upon conquering herself, she loved herself.
Hoje exibe a negra bela cara	Today she exhibits her beautiful black face
ao sol ardente que reveste a rua.	To the fierce sun that dresses the road.
Satisfaz-se	She is satisfied
A vida é uma cabeça	Life is a head
A consciência é sua.	The mind is hers.

QUOTE 2: "Resgate" ("Ransom")

Sou negra ponto final	I am black period
devolva-me a identidade	return my identity to me
rasgue minha certidão	tear up my birth certificate

sou negra sem reticências — I am black with no ellipsis
sem vírgulas e sem ausências — no commas and nothing missing
não quero mais meio-termo — I no longer want in-betweens
sou negra balacobaco — I am black tough terrific
sou negra noite cansaço — I am black night weariness
sou negra ponto final — I am black period

QUOTE 3: “Brasil”

Que faço com a minha cara de índia?	What should I do with my Indian face?
E meus cabelos	And my hair
E minhas rugas	And my wrinkles
E minha história	And my history
E meus segredos?	And my secrets?
Que faço com a minha cara de índia?	What should I do with my Indian face?
E meus espíritos	And my spirits
E minha força	And my strength
E meu Tupã	And my *Tupã*
E meus círculos?	And my circles?
. . .	
Que faço com a minha cara de índia?	What should I do with my Indian face?
E meu sangue	And my blood
E minha consciência	And my consciousness
E minha luta?	And my struggle?
E nossos filhos?	And my children?
Brasil, que faço com a minha cara de índia?	Brazil, What should I do with my Indian [face?

(*Metade cara* 34; my translation)

QUOTE 4: “Consciência Tikuna;” Tikuna Consciousness, fragment

Sou um cachorro raivoso e irado	I am a rabid and mad dog
E minhas garras cortam as gargantas	And my claws cut the throats
Das feras, nos portões de ferro do mundo.	of beasts, at the iron gates of the world.

(*Metade cara* 39; my translation)

QUOTE 5: “Sepé Tiaraju”

Eu sou rebelde	I’m rebellious
E faço questão de o ser.	And make a point of being so.
Tenho fome, tenho ódio	I feel hunger, I feel hatred
E não me dêem uma metralhadora.	And don’t give a machine gun.

(*Metade cara* 62; my translation)

[iv] All poems by Afro-Brazilian writers here discussed can be found in *Enfim nós/Finally Us. Contemporary Black Brazilian Women Writers*. Eds. Miriam Alves and Carolyn Richardson Durham, eds. Trans. Carolyn Richardson Durham. Boulder: Three Continents P, 1994.

Revolutionizing Contemporary Theories: Anzaldúa's Politics of Spirit

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I begin with three quotations, drawn from three distinct points in Gloria Anzaldúa's career. The first, written in 1980, is from her introduction to "El Mundo Zurdo: The Vision," the final section of *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*:

> We, the women here, take a trip back into the self, travel to the deep core of our roots to discover and reclaim our colored souls, our rituals, our religion. We reach a spirituality that has been hidden in the hearts of oppressed people under layers of centuries of traditional god-worship. (195)

The second, written in the mid 1980s, is from her well-known *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*:

> We're not supposed to remember . . . otherworldly events. We're supposed to ignore, forget, kill those fleeting images of the soul's presence and of the spirit's presence. We've been taught that the spirit is outside our bodies or above our heads somewhere up in the sky with God. We're supposed to forget that every cell in our bodies, every bone and bird and worm has spirit in it. (36)

And the third, written in the early years of the twenty-first century, is from one of her most recent essays, "now let us shift....the path of conocimiento...inner work, public acts":

> With awe and wonder you look around, recognizing the preciousness of the earth, the sanctity of every human being on the planet, the ultimate unity and interdependence of all beings--somos todos un paíz. Love swells in your chest and shoots out of your heart chakra, linking you to everyone/everything . . . . You share a category of identity wider than any social position or racial label. This conocimiento motivates you to work actively to see that no harm comes to people, animals, ocean--to take up spiritual activism and the work of healing. (558)

As these quotations indicate, throughout her career, Anzaldúa insists on a politics of spirit. With theories like El Mundo Zurdo, the Borderlands, mestiza consciousness, nos/otras, nepantla and nepantleras, new tribalism, and conocimiento,[v] she develops a holistic worldview that synergistically combines social activism with spiritual vision, creating what she calls "spiritual activism." As I define the term, spiritual activism is a visionary, experientially-based epistemology and ethics--a way of life and a call to action. Spiritual activism is spirituality for social change, spirituality that recognizes the many differences among us yet insists on our commonalities and uses these commonalities as catalysts for transformation.[vi]

All too often, however, scholars ignore Anzaldúa's politics of spirit and focus on the more conventionally political dimensions of her work. Given the academy's over-emphasis on rational thought, coupled with the mind/body dualisms pervading western

cultures, this resistance to exploring the overtly spiritual dimensions of Anzaldúa's work is not surprising. When we talk about spirit worlds, soul, transformation, interconnectedness, the sacred, and so forth, we risk accusations of essentialism, escapism, naive religiosity, or other forms of apolitical thinking.

However, these spiritual concepts are deeply embedded in Anzaldúa's writings and inspire some of the most innovative dimensions of her theories. To ignore them unnecessarily limits understanding and application of her work. This paper has two parts. First, I describe Anzaldúa's theory of spiritual activism. Second, I suggest a few of the ways Anzaldúa's politics of spirit could challenge and transform existing approaches to contemporary social-justice theories (such as [some] multicultural-feminist, ethnic, and cultural-studies theorizing).

To be sure, the phrase "spiritual activism" seems like a contradiction in terms: On the one hand, the word "spiritual" is often assumed to indicate an other-worldly, inward-looking worldview that encourages escape from and at times even denial of social injustices. On the other hand, the word "activism" is often assumed to indicate outward-directed engagement with and action in the material world, the very world that spirituality seems to reject or downplay. Yet for Anzaldúa and other spiritual activists, these two worlds and worldviews are not separate. The spiritual/material, inner/outer, individual/collective dimensions of life are parts of a larger whole, interjoined in a complex, interwoven pattern.

This synergistic synthesis of apparent opposites distinguishes spiritual activism both from mainstream "New Age"[3] movements and from conventional organized religions. Whereas "New Age" belief systems focus almost, if not entirely, on the personal and thus leave the existing oppressive social structures in place,[4] spiritual activism begins within the individual but moves outward in order to challenge and transform these unjust social structures. And, whereas conventional organized religions impose authority on individuals through external teachings, texts, standards, and leaders, spiritual activism locates authority within each individual, individuals often scarred by oppressive contacts with those they have encountered. As Anzaldúa explains, "Our spirituality does not come from outside ourselves. It emerges when we listen to the 'small still voice' (Teish) within us which can empower us to create actual change in the world" ("El Mundo Zurdo" 195).

Although spiritual activism begins within the individual, it does not result in egocentrism, self-glorification, or other types of solipsistic individualism. Rather, spiritual activism combines self-reflection and self-growth with outward-directed, compassionate acts designed to bring about material change.[5] Thus in "La Prieta" Anzaldúa describes an intricate reciprocal process that links self-exploration with social-justice actions. She insists that self-change and social transformation are mutually interdependent: "I believe that by changing ourselves we change the world, that traveling El Mundo Zurdo path is the path of a two-way movement–a going deep into the self and an expanding out into the world, a simultaneous recreation of the self and a reconstruction of society. And yet, I am confused as to how to accomplish this" (208). Anzaldúa's statement illustrates both her strongly held belief that individual and collective change must occur together and her recognition that this transformative process is a difficult, complicated endeavor, filled with uncertainty and unanswered questions.

Fully acknowledging these uncertainties, Anzaldúa maintains her confidence in the political effectiveness of her relational worldview. As I have argued elsewhere, she posits a metaphysics of interconnectedness and insists on the interrelatedness of all life forms.[vii] Drawing on indigenous philosophies, she describes a fluid, cosmic spirit, energy, or force that embodies itself throughout–and *as*–all existence. As she explains in a 1982 interview, "Spirit exists in everything; therefore God, the divine, is in everything–in blacks as well as whites, rapists as well as victims; it's in the tree, the swamp, the sea . . . . Some people call it 'God;' some call it the 'creative force,' whatever. It's in everything" (*Interviews/Entrevistas* 100).[7] Twenty years later she makes a similar claim: "Spirit infuses all that exists–organic and inorganic–transcending the categories and concepts that govern your perception of material reality" ("now" 558).[viii] As these quotations indicate, throughout her career, Anzaldúa maintains a spirit-infused, relational worldview.

Anzaldúa's insistence on our radical interconnectedness serves as the ground for the following discussion of spiritual activism's theoretical implications. Due to time constraints, I'll focus on Anzaldúa's invitation to move beyond binary-oppositional frameworks for identity formation and social change.

Generally, self-identification functions through exclusion and binary opposition: we define who and what we are by defining who and what we are not. These exclusionary identities occur within a restrictive framework that marks, divides, and segregates based on a narrow, dualistic model of difference. As Patricia Hill Collins explains, "In either/or dichotomous thinking, difference is defined in oppositional terms. One part is not simply different from its counterpart; it is inherently opposed to its `other.' Whites and Blacks, males and females, thought and feeling, are not complementary counterparts–they are fundamentally different entities related only through their definitions as opposites" (70).

Anzaldúa and other spiritual activists take a nonbinary approach. As she explains in her introduction to *this bridge we call home*, "Many of us identify with groups and social positions not limited to our ethnic, racial, religious, class, gender, or national classifications. Though most people self-define by what they *ex*clude, we define who we are by what we *in*clude" ("(Un)natural bridges" 3, my emphasis). Significantly, Anzaldúa does not discount the importance of gender, 'race,' sexuality, ability, and other identity categories. However, she maintains that these conventional categories are too restrictive and cannot adequately define us. When we base our assessments of others entirely–or even primarily--on their social locations, we unnecessarily close ourselves off from potential allies. As Anzaldúa explains, "For the politically correct stance we let color, class, and gender separate us from those who would be kindred spirits. So the walls grow higher, the gulfs between us wider, the silences more profound" ("La Prieta" 206).

Positing radical interconnectedness, Anzaldúa reframes these walls into doorways. She adopts a both-and perspective enabling her simultaneously to see and see through exclusionary identity classifications. Defining each person as part of a larger (cosmic) whole, she insists on a commonality shared by all human beings–no matter how different we appear to be, no matter how different we *are*. This "common factor" goes beyond–*but does not ignore*–identities based on gender, "race," or other systems of difference; it is "wider than any social position or racial label" ("now" 558). Indeed, this

shared identity factor is wider than anything in "human nature;" each person "has roots you share with all people and other beings--spirit, feeling, and body comprise a greater identity category. The body is rooted in the earth, la tierra itself. You meet ensoulment in trees, in woods, in streams" ("now" 560).

I want to emphasize the innovative possibilities Anzaldúa opens up here. Typically, social-justice activists formulate their politics and actions around identity-related issues.[ix] While this approach can be useful, it limits us in at least two ways. First, because identity-based politics rely on already-existing categories that originated in oppressive histories, they inadvertently buttress the existing unjust socio-political framework and limit our visions of social change. As Leela Fernandes explains, "while identity-based movements are effective in mobilizing short term political action, in the long run *they cannot produce an alternative future that is free from the very identity-based divisions and inequalities that they oppose"*[x] (26-27, my emphasis).

Second, these exclusionary categories inhibit our alliance-making powers. Like the oppositional identities from which they emerge, identity-based politics rely on and reinforce an us-against-them worldview. When we ground identities and alliances in dualistically-defined categories, we establish and police boundaries–boundaries that shut us in with those we've deemed "like" "us" and boundaries that close us off from those whom we assume to be different. These boundaries prevent us from recognizing commonalities and developing broad-based projects for social change. Identities become ends in themselves, rather than useful tools as we move towards larger goals like transformation, liberation, and social justice.

Don't get me wrong! I am not suggesting that we dismiss all identity categories and declare ourselves from this day forward "color-blind," gender-blind, and so forth. However, when we *automatically* label people by color, gender, sexuality, religion, or any other politically-charged characteristics, we assume both a false homogeneity within and radical differences between each categorized group. The boundaries between various groups of people–and, by extension, the theoretical perspectives designed to represent them–become rigid, inflexible, and restrictive. These categories distort our perceptions, creating arbitrary divisions among us and a combative mentality that inhibits social change.

This oppositional logic reduces interactional possibilities to two options: Either we are entirely the same *or* we are entirely different. Viewing ourselves and others through this binary lens, we assume that the differences between ourselves and the various others we encounter are too different–too *other*, as it were--to have *anything* (of importance) in common. Where is the room for complexity, compromise, and exchange? This oppositional framework leads to inflexible, rigid positions; intragroup battles; and judgmental, dismissive attitudes–or what Jacqui Alexander describes as "mono-thinking" (98). We assume that there is only one right way to think, act, theorize, or be. I've seen (both in person and in print) this dynamic happen many times, when people or groups oppressed in similar (not identical) ways attempt to develop alliances which fragment from within, and often over fairly minor issues.

I question whether the binary-oppositional energies so crucial to social-justice theories are as useful today as they were in the past. These energies become poisonous when we direct them at each other, as we too often do.[11] M. Jacqui Alexander makes a similar point: "[o]ur oppositional politic has been necessary, but it will never sustain us;

while it may give us some temporary gains. . . . it can never ultimately feed that deep place within us: that space of the erotic, that space of the soul, that space of the Divine" (99).

In her writings, Anzaldúa speaks from and to this "deep place within us." By so doing, she enacts a transformative politics of spirit seen in theories like El Mundo Zurdo, conocimiento, mestiza consciousness, the Borderlands, nepantleras, and spiritual activism. Positing our radical interconnectedness–or what she describes in "now let us shift" as "the deep common ground and interwoven kinship among all things and people" (566)-- Anzaldúa challenges us to move beyond mono-thinking, binary-oppositional politics, and other forms of self-destructive thought. Her theories–and her willingness to risk ostracism by insisting on spiritual activism--offer useful tools ("spiritual technologies"[xi]) we can use as we create new theoretical perspectives, pedagogies, and social-justice actions.

Notes

This essay and the ideas that shape it have gone through many shifting forms in the past five (!) years. Thanks to Suzanne Bost, Irene Lara, Carrie McMaster, Harry McMaster, the students in my 2003 and 2004 Gloria Anzaldúa graduate seminar, and the audience at the 2002 NWSA panel on Anzaldúa. Special thanks to Eddy Lynton for listening to and reading innumerable drafts of this essay and to Gloria Anzaldúa for giving me the term "spiritual activism," for our discussions on this topic, and for commenting on several earlier drafts of this essay.

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[1]For discussions of El Mundo Zurdo, nos/otras, nepantla and nepantleras, new tribalism, and conocimiento see my introduction to *EntreMundos/AmongWorlds: New Perspectives on Gloria Anzaldúa*.

[2]Although I first encountered the phrase "spiritual activism" in Anzaldúa's work, the term is now very common term (my recent Google search turned up 45,400 "hits"). Although Anzaldúa has been talking about "spiritual activism" for over ten years (see for example *Interviews/Entrevistas* 38, 178), I have no idea whether she actually coined the term. How would one prove such a thing, and does it matter? My hunch is that she, along with others, began using the term simultaneously, illustrating what Anzaldúa herself might refer to as a zeitgeist. I should also note that my discussion of spiritual activism represents a blending of my thoughts and Anzaldúa's.

[3]I put "New Age" in quotation marks to emphasize my belief that this so-called "New" Age is not really new but simply represents the most recent manifestation of longstanding movements and traditions.

[4]As Joel Kovel insightfully notes, "Since New Age thinking does not challenge fundamental social structures, its spirituality remains self-preoccupied, even as it attempts to get beyond the self: thus soul, whose essence is self-abandonment, is cultivated as a project of self-fulfillment" (209).

[5]See Anzaldúa's assertion in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, "[t]he struggle is inner: Chicano, indio, American Indian, mojado, mexicano, immigrant Latino, Anglo in power, working class Anglo, Black, Asian–our psyches resemble the bordertowns and are populated by

the same people. The struggle has always been inner, and is played out in outer terrains. Awareness of our situation must come before inner changes, which in turn come before changes in society. Nothing happens in the 'real' world unless it first happens in the images in our heads" (87).

[6]I discuss this metaphysics of interconnectedness in more detail in the introduction to Anzaldúa's *Interviews/Entrevistas*.

[7]Note Anzaldúa's willingness to describe 'Spirit' in various ways. This flexibility is a common trait among spiritual activists and plays an important role in the ability to develop nonoppositional approaches to social change.

[8]For an in-depth discussion of spiritual activism's individual and collective dimensions and uses, see my "Shifting Perspectives: Spiritual Activism, Social Transformation, and the Politics of Spirit."

[9]As Leela Fernandes explains, "identity continues to serve as the ground from which to work for change and to which to retreat for a sense of safety and belonging" (28).

[x] [10]She continues: "While oppositional movements based on identity have been necessary to address the blindness to various forms of injustice, such movements cannot in the long run provide a viable alternative because they inevitably must rest on a form of identification that explicitly or implicitly is based on an oppositional distinction from another group"

[11]In such instances, we enact what Timothy Powell describes as "corrosive exchanges" (168) and embark on a "downward spiral of ever more hostile counteraccusations that tend to irrupt when a multiplicity of contentious and contrasting cultural points of view come into contact" (175). See also Flora Bridges' excellent discussion of oppositional discourse.

[12]I borrow the term "spiritual technologies" from Jacqui Alexander.

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Anzaldúa's Paradigm for Queer Theory

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> *Returning is being but only the being of becoming.*
> *- Gilles Deleuze,* Difference and Repetition *(41).*
>
> *[T]he past can be as malleable as the present.*
> *- Gloria Anzaldúa, "Haciendo caras, una entrada" (xxvii).*

I begin with these two quotations, one from Gilles Deleuze and the other from Gloria Anzaldúa, to alert us to the resonances between these two thinkers. Suggesting such resonances should not be read as an argument for compatibility or direct influence; I do not intend to find in Anzaldúa a guide to Deleuze's complex philosophy, nor are there any references, to my knowledge, to Deleuze in any of Anzaldúa's texts. I do propose, however, that considering some such convergences allows us to reflect on Anzaldúa's strange occlusion from queer theory—a field where Deleuze, too, gets hardly a mention. Her marginality in the most institutionalized approaches to queer thinking becomes all the more curious when we consider that *Borderlands/La Frontera* was published in 1987, the same year as Judith Butler's *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France*, which laid the philosophical groundwork for her theory of performativity, and some three years before Butler's influential *Gender Trouble* and the special issue on queer theory in the journal *differences*, edited by Teresa de Lauretis. In its most institutionalized forms, queer theory has been informed in particular by Butler's work. I suggest that her work, and consequently a large part of queer thinking, proceeds from an often unacknowledged paradigmatic perspective with which Anzaldúa's philosophy is incompatible.

To reconsider Anzaldúa's work for queer theory, I explore the evolutionary references in her work. While her evolutionary idiom clearly constitutes what Mary Pat Brady calls one of the "series of repeating terms" (83) in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, most academic readers have not had much to say about it. This uneasy silence, I suggest, is the result of the dominance of paradigms through whose lenses Anzaldúa's metaphysical assumptions seem naïve, pre-critical, or, simply, incomprehensible. To approach Anzaldúa's evolutionary thinking from a more hospitable perspective, I link it to Deleuze's (and, through him, Henri Bergson's) work on "creative evolution." Taking Anzaldúa's work seriously in queer theory, I suggest, demands that we, first, acknowledge the paradigmatic specificity that has characterized the most influential queer-theoretical approaches and, second, search for, or develop, a perspective that allows us to consider the question of metaphysics as it appears in Anzaldúa.

Anzaldúa and Queer Theory

Unlike José Vasconcelos, whose essay *La raza cósmica* (1925) she cites in the chapter that closes the prose section of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa refers to evolutionary change in ambivalent, fluid terms. For her, the new *mestiza* may allow "*some kind* of evolutionary step forward" (81; emphasis added). Alluding to forms of existence yet to come with intentional ambiguity, Anzaldúa avoids repeating Vasconcelos's teleology. According to Judith Raiskin, for example, Anzaldúa's theory of queer *mestizaje*

> challenges the modernist longing for unity and cohesiveness implicit in both [Vasconcelos's] conception of the mestizo and his patriotic invention of the new Mexican identity. … [Anzaldúa's] is a vision that, while grounded in modernist longings for salvation, does not locate that salvation in a desire for coherence, simplicity, or stasis. (163)

Raiskin nevertheless concludes that Anzaldúa's thinking remains "ultimately utopian" (163), consequently reintroducing teleology.[1] Comparing *Borderlands/La Frontera* to Michelle Cliff's novel *No Telephone Heaven*, she writes: "Unlike Anzaldúa's, Cliff's vision is not utopian … . While Anzaldúa spins for us a dream of cosmic interconnectedness, Cliff forces us to scrutinize not only the systems of representation we have inherited but also the new ones we create from within those systems as well" (167). Raiskin somewhat sarcastically describes the new *mestiza* "gloriously overcom[ing]" the burden of racist, colonial, and homophobic exploitation (168), whereas Cliff, for her, views all forms of resistance through the critical lens that allows her to analyze oppression and power.

It is no accident that the comparison between Anzaldúa and Cliff emerges from Raiskin's use of the theory of performativity. For Raiskin, the concept of identity that Cliff's protagonists illustrate "approximates Judith Butler's theoretical articulation of postmodern identity as 'performative,'" an observation that is immediately followed by her verdict: "Unlike Anzaldúa's, Cliff's vision is not utopian" (167). Anzaldúa's thinking lacks the rigors of suspicion that Butler's influential work on subjection and performativity has inculcated in us: we are trained not only to analyze "systems of representation" but to remain alert to the contamination of our "own" discourse as it emerges from within the power constellations where we are situated. Critiquing queer theory's "paranoid imperative," Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick suggests that performativity disenables a thinking and theorization of the emergent, the surprising, and the new, an emphasis that is central in Anzaldúa. Because its driving force is to eliminate the possibility of unexpectedness (Sedgwick, 9, 12), the paranoid system also remains clueless in the face of invention and newness.

We are faced here with paradigmatic differences, where the perspective of one paradigm renders the arguments of the other unreadable, naïve, nonsensical. For example,

[1] Annamarie Jagose, too, finds Anzaldúa's concepts troubling in that her "nostalgia for the *mestiza* as a site of a utopic intermixture, hybridization, and confluence merely inverts the privileging, in the discourses of colonialism, homophobia and phallocentrism, of the slash of the border as the site of taxonomic closure" (138).

in drawing our attention to Anzaldúa's references to "cosmic interconnectedness" (167), Raiskin is, of course, not incorrect: Anzaldúa consistently speaks of "metaphysics of interconnectedness" in her work. Yet, through her Butlerian filter, Raiskin can hear in these terms only vague New Age-ishness and is unable to reflect on what one could call Anzaldúa's *monism*. Her paradigm, in other words, prevents Raiskin from giving serious consideration to the metaphysical system of *Borderlands/La Frontera*.

Anzaldúa and Bodies' Resonance

Anzaldúa comments that, with the new *mestiza*, "[she] was trying to get away from just thinking in terms of blood—you know, the mestiza as being of mixed blood" (*Interviews* 133). The new *mestiza* is not a product of vertical reproduction, a branch off the family tree, however twisted. But neither is it reducible to a "metaphor" or to "nonmateriality" (163), as Raiskin argues. With the metaphor, we are dealing with language, with discourse. Yet, Anzaldúa, I would argue, is not primarily interested in representation or the signifier; hers is not an epistemological project. Instead, in philosophical terms her work is *ontological*, a field that has been largely abandoned in contemporary academic and philosophical approaches to theories of minorities and oppression (see Grosz, *Nick*, *Time*). I suggest that, to read Anzaldúa as a theorist of being (and, as I will argue, of becoming), we must consider her theory of shared bodies as well as her understanding of the past's productivity.

As "a product of crossbreeding" (*Borderlands* 81), the new *mestiza*, the queer hybrid, is Anzaldúa's figure for her metaphysics of interconnectedness. Her narrator observes: "I am all races because there is the queer of me in all races" (80); "I am in all cultures at the same time" (77). This connectedness where bodies are linked in imperceptible ways does not come about through colonization. It may be rendered more visible in such "contact zones" (as Mary Louise Pratt calls them), but it is an ontological condition in Anzaldúa's monistic universe, "where all phenomena are interrelated and imbued with spirit" (66). Such monism brings her system close to Deleuze's reading of Spinoza's single substance.[2] According to Deleuze, in Spinoza's view bodies are made of several parts: "There are no existing bodies, within Extension, that are not composed of a very great number of simple bodies" (*Expressionism* 201)—or "subpersonalities" (*Interviews* 242), as Anzaldúa calls them. Modes, or bodies, can be seen as coagulations in a field of the single substance, held together by the relations peculiar to them. Some bodies that contribute to these singular relations are shared with other modes, in which these parts enter into different relations. Because of these shared bodies, modes do not form self-enclosed, sovereign, or completely separable entities but overlap with other modes, sharing some of their parts that each mode submits to a unique relation with other parts. Distinct from one another in their specific internal relations, they are connected through the parts they share (and, ultimately, the single substance of which they are

[2] Again, my aim here is not to elide the differences between Anzaldúa and Deleuze. For example, the exact similarities and differences between Deleuze's understanding of substance and Anzaldúa's view of "an ordered, structured universe" (66) need to be carefully investigated.

expressions): “Thus each individual is an infinite multiplicity” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand* 254).

In problematizing boundaries and categories—particularly in her later work, boundaries not only between human individuals but between the human and the nonhuman[3]—Anzaldúa is clearly engaged in questioning what Keith Ansell Pearson calls “the Western tradition of ontotheology,” with its “bias … in favour of self-sufficiency and closed boundaries (a conception of life that is not without its political articulations and implication).” In rethinking evolutionary theory by problematizing borders, she demonstrates that “absolute boundaries are radically anti-evolutionary since they entail stasis” (166-67). By insisting on the resonance of bodies, Anzaldúa’s metaphysics of interconnectedness simultaneously emphasizes evolutionary change, its relentless *becoming*.

Anzaldúa and Involution

Like late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century sexologists and racial scientists, Anzaldúa sees queerness as a condition that has a peculiar relation to temporality and to the past. In such texts as *Borderlands/La Frontera*, “La Prieta,” and the introduction to *Haciendo caras*, queerness is figured as a monstrosity, a throwback. Indeed, her theory of shared bodies and evolutionary leaps suggests that sexologists and racial scientists were not wrong in declaring the homosexual woman an aberration in the linear progression of evolutionary time (see Somerville, ch. 1). Yet, while they considered homosexuality an atavistic and entropic condition, Anzaldúa sees queerness as productive of an unforeseeable future. For her, queerness is a condition of becoming.

To render her thinking distinct from post-Darwinian evolutionary theories, I suggest we characterize Anzaldúa’s theory of the past as *involutionary*. As a movement inwards or back in time, involution in biology and physiology connotes aging and degeneration, a “retrograde process of development,” the very “opposite of evolution.” It refers to an organ’s becoming redundant “when its permanent or temporary purpose has been fulfilled” (*OED*). Conceived in terms of purposeful existence, an involute organ can be seen only as a leftover without an effective role in the evolutionary present. As such, it names the dynamics of queer atavism, as the tendency of development to turn back on itself, that nineteenth-century sexology propounded. Yet, Anzaldúa and Deleuze re-evaluate such schemas by problematizing the usual evolutionary thinking about time, where the past is a non-productive, inert realm of the lesser or the superseded. Deleuze

[3] In 1993, for example, she insists that “to be human is to be in relationship; to be human is to be related to other people, to be interdependent with other people” (*Interviews* 206). Crucially, commenting a few years later on this view, she notes the shift in her thinking away from human-centeredness: “I now believe alliances entail interdependent relationships with the whole environment—with the plants, the earth, and the air as well as people” (195). In Deleuzian terms, such connectedness beyond the human—where “[e]verything and everyone is in relationship with everything else” (242)—might be called rhizomatic relatedness. As Anzaldúa observes, “The self does not stop with just you, with your body. The self penetrates other things and they penetrate you” (162).

and Guattari write in *A Thousand Plateaus*: "Becoming is involution, involution is creative. To regress is to move in the direction of something less differentiated. But to involve is to form a block that runs its own line 'between' the terms in play and beneath assignable relations" (238-39).

This movement back as an enfolding onto the past describes Anzaldúa's theory of the productivity of queer throwbacks and monsters. For Anzaldúa, queerness, as involutionary, names a productive detour through the past. Instead of following sexologists in seeing queer hybrids as degenerates—throwbacks to earlier, more rudimentary evolutionary stages—Anzaldúa describes them as mutations that reconfigure the horizon of possibilities by activating the past. This past, which she sees as a reservoir of as-yet unactualized alternatives, can be called, following Bergson and Deleuze, the realm of the virtual. In the involutionary process of becoming-residual, the function becomes not precisely obsolescent but virtual.

While she does not deploy the term, Elizabeth Grosz, in her recent re-reading of Darwin, argues that the present evolutionary stage always bears involute traces of the past: "Both languages and species contain within their present forms rudiments or residues of their own previous historical forms, vestiges that inscribe their present form with the traces of their past, living forms of memory" (*Nick* 30). These residues can be seen as the waste or leftover of the evolutionary progress, yet also quiescent or dormant potentialities that may be reactivated. As Grosz writes, proposing an involutionary understanding of time and becoming:

> The individuals who never developed into maturing adults—the evolutionary residue, those that leave no trace, no progeny—cannot simply be regarded as the losers, the inferior, in the evolutionary battle for adaptation. They remain the undeveloped, the latent, the recessive, a virtual forever unactualized outside the traditional lines of genealogy. … These residues of selection cannot be simply conceived, in Hegelian terms, as that which is overcome or sublated, the negative that is transcended in a movement of the positive; they are not dialectical remnants but virtualities that remain unactualized, potentials unexpressed, forces redirected in their trajectory. (*Nick* 50)

This reactivation may take place by the very process of involution, for involution also names a (re)turn to virtuality, a leap into the past and the realm of the residual, which may reconfigure the present. If involution suggests a degenerative turning toward the past, it also names the process of becoming-virtual. It is the active present's conversion into not the obsolescent but the virtual.

In Anzaldúa, then, the past is not an immobile realm that can be expressed only in degenerate, morbid forms, but the realm of the virtual from where newness may be actualized. "[T]he past," we remember, "can be as malleable as the present." Involution, then, is not degeneration as a simple movement backwards but an activation of the virtual, where "dormant areas of consciousness are being activated, awakened" (*Borderlands,* "Preface" n.p.). If Anzaldúa's theory of involution requires that we understand her system as ontological, as a theory of being, then the role of becoming, of futurity, in her thinking can be rephrased with Deleuze: "Returning is being but only the being of becoming."

But if Anzaldúa gives us a queer understanding of temporality and becoming, we must note the inassimilability of her thinking to the field we have come to recognize as queer theory. I suggest that her work requires a paradigmatically different approach from the one that has dominated queer thinking since the late 1980s. Anzaldúa's metaphysical assumptions render her theory of the past different from any understanding of memory and becoming that posit a psychologized, anthropomorphic access to the past as its requirement. Radically deanthropomorphic, Anzaldúa's work departs from any notion of inaccurate repetitions of existing power constellations, which always require some form of human recognition. While any ramifications of this line of thought remain to be explored, I suggest that her work, in its insistence on thinking metaphysics, may help us reopen (or, at the very least, acknowledge) the theoretical narrative that has come to dominate queer theory.

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Reviews/Reseñas

Violations: Stories of Love by Latin American Women. Edited by Psiche Hughes. Lincoln and London: U of Nebraska P, 2004. 187 pp.

A provocative collection of sixteen short stories, *Violations: Stories of Love by Latin American Women* is the latest title in the Latin American Women Writer's Series whose editors have previously made available (in English translation) works by many of the continent's most celebrated female authors including Alicia Borinsky, Diamela Eltit, Rosario Ferré, Tununa Mercado, Elena Poniatowska, and Alicia Steimberg. Psiche Hughes' audacious compilation showcases short fictions from the second half of the twentieth century that openly challenge and subvert an implicit but no less stringent "code of 'decency'" (xv) imposed primarily upon women writers. Even as the carefully selected tales maintain structural and thematic unity (female-authored prose sharing a common theme), the collection highlights stylistic diversity and unabashedly favors radical transgressions of the "love story."

In fact, as the volume's title indicates, the general subject matter (*stories of love*) remains subordinate to the more explicit concept of *violations*. It is indeed an impassioned "spirit of transgression" (xvi)—linguistic and stylistic as well as thematic—that unifies the collection. Insisting upon a recent transformation in the treatment of love by Latin American women writers who refuse to adhere to traditional constraints, the editor asserts that these stories "have been selected because they are different and exciting, and they illustrate the various forms in which this violation occurs" (xv). Hughes' introductory remarks offer a broad (and thereby inclusive) schematic classification for the selected narrations: the stories in *Violations* are shown to exhibit infringements of social, religious, political, and sexual codes (xvi-xvii).

To this end, the anthology (which brings together such diverse writers as Cristina Peri Rossi, Armonía Somers, Margo Glantz, Ana María Shua, Elena Poniatowska, Angeles Mastretta, Nélida Piñon, Carmen Boullosa, Liliana Heker, and Luisa Valenzuela among others) not only contains the requisite narrations of adolescent self-discovery, sexual desire, and dissatisfied housewives but also includes graphic tales of domestic violence, overt eroticism, adultery, obsessive cleanliness, prostitution, and love-hate relationships with maids. The stories–which feature female narrators and protagonists of various ages and occupations—alternate from humorous to horrific, from satiric to tragic even as they remain consistently experimental.

With its titillating survey of contemporary women's writing from across the continent (Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Cuba, Peru, Uruguay as well as Mexico), *Violations: Stories of Love by Latin American Women* is an enticing introduction for the initiate. At the same time, the self-conscious focus on transgressive fictions will further seduce students and scholars of women's writing and Latin American literature.

Janis Breckenridge
Hiram College

McGovern, Lynn Ann. *Contando historias: Las primeras novelas de Lourdes Ortiz*. Madrid: Pliegos, 2004. ISBN: 84-96045-26-9

En su libro *Contando historias: Las primeras novelas de Lourdes Ortiz* (2004), Lynn Ann McGovern establece la importancia de Lourdes Ortiz en el panorama literario de la España de la Transición. Como bien dice McGovern: "Las novelas de Ortiz son la encarnación de una nueva sensibilidad que incluye diversidad en todas sus manifestaciones, desde la religión hasta el género sexual" (147). Al reconocer a Ortiz como novelista influyente de la época contemporánea y como "voz de la prudencia, el equilibrio y la reconciliación" (156), McGovern logra llenar una brecha en la crítica literaria de las letras españolas—la de los estudios sobre Lourdes Ortiz como escritora en general y, específicamente, como novelista. Es más: la estrecha relación profesional que tiene McGovern con Ortiz le permite indagar sutil y cuidadosamente en la formación de la autora y en cómo influye en su producción literaria. La actividad periodística de Ortiz, su afición al ambiente madrileño, su don de lenguaje y sus numerosos escritos en los géneros del teatro, del ensayo y de la novela contribuyen a su estatus como figura central de la escritura contemporánea de España.

El estudio de McGovern consta de siete capítulos: una breve introducción, una examinación útil e interesante de los efectos de la transición a la democracia en los estudios de género, una biografía literaria de Ortiz con un estudio sobre las novelas *Luz de la memoria* (1976), *En días como estos* (1981) y *Arcángeles* (1986), dos capítulos que juntos son un estudio minucioso del carácter posmoderno e historiográfico de *Urraca* (1982), el estudio del "nacimiento de la mujer detective" en *Picadura mortal* (1979) y una conclusión. Esta estructura permite una amplia visión de la escritura de Ortiz producida durante los años 70 y 80. Sin embargo, el libro habría beneficiado de mayor inclusión de crítica más reciente sobre estas obras tempranas de Ortiz y de más información sobre la trayectoria novelesca de Ortiz en los últimos 20 años.

McGovern le provee al lector una visión del medio ambiente de la Transición mediante la contextualización de la obra de Ortiz dentro del panorama literario general: los otros autores de la época (e.g. Martín Gaite, Vázquez Montalbán), la influencia de la crítica del posmodernismo y la "movida" madrileña. Mientras el lector capta la noción de cambio en el medio ambiente de Ortiz, también empieza a entender el papel de Ortiz como pionera literaria, sobre todo debido a sus aportes a la novela detectivesca. McGovern asevera que las novelas de Ortiz "subrayan la noción de que la verdad tiene vida propia" (29). Con este concepto, McGovern consigue tejer las dos vertientes de la novelística de Ortiz, la posmodernista y la feminista. Todos los ejemplos textuales empleados por McGovern revelan esta consistente y doble preocupación crítica, así estableciendo un hilo conductor justificado e interesante en el estudio de McGovern.

Las secciones más interesantes y relevantes para los estudios literarios actuales son los estudios de *Arcángeles* (en el Capítulo II) y de *Urraca* (en el Capítulo III). Para *Arcángeles*, McGovern hace hincapié en la capacidad de Ortiz de narrar historia y de crear una "historia femenina matrilineal" (52). Con respecto a *Urraca*, McGovern nota la diferencia entre la novela histórica tradicional y la escrita por Ortiz: "En *Urraca*, Ortiz muestra que los límites culturales y los relacionados con el género sexual pueden ser franqueados y mina éstas y otras creencias" (65). Estas secciones demuestran una aguda

sensibilidad literaria de parte de McGovern, a la vez que le proveen al lector un verdadero sabor textual de las novelas de Ortiz, a través de citas de las novelas y apropiado apoyo crítico.

Al concluir su examinación de las primeras novelas de Ortiz, McGovern describe lo que ve como el *Weltangshauung* de la autora: "Al enfocarse en personajes, que en su propio tiempo languidecieron a la sombra de figuras centrales y fueron olvidados o silenciados, Ortiz ofrece una perspectiva alternativa que finalmente pone en tela de juicio el concepto del lector de conocimiento objetivo. Esta visión des-centrada expande el campo del lector para incluir voces existentes que han sido descuidadas o perdidas hace tiempo" (146). Es decir que, Ortiz demuestra una voz propia, que de verdad es una combinación de las múltiples voces que pueblan sus novelas, y explora los contornos del género de novela a través de sus experimentos con la novela histórica y la novela negra.

Los estudiantes y críticos interesados en Ortiz y en la literatura, política e historia de la Transición encontrarán en este libro de McGovern una elucidación sobre los aportes literarios de Ortiz y la manera de que éstos han sido influidos por la cultura de la época.

Ellen Mayock
Washington and Lee University

Pérez Bustamante, Ana Sofía. E*l placer de la escritura o Nuevo retablo de Maese Pedro* Mourier, editor, illustrated by Candi Garbarino (17 color illustrations), in Textos y Estudios de Mujeres, Publicaciones de la Universidad de Cádiz, 2005. 303 pages.

Those of you who, like myself, are familiar with the series Textos y Estudios de Mujer published by the University of Cádiz Press and devoted to critical studies and anthologies of women writers, are well acquainted with the quality in both content and form that characterizes these editions. Undoubtedly for Ana Sofía Pérez Bustamante Mourier, editor of the series and of this anthology, its production has been a labor of love, resulting in a luxury for us readers –a luxurious edition (it is accompanied by seventeen color illustrations of original works by the artist Candi Gabarino), offering us the luxury of getting to know twelve women poets based in Cádiz.

Charged with rereading *Don Quixote* for the five hundredth anniversary of the publication of Part I, these poets offer us their personal poetics. As one reads them several characteristics shared by first-person narratives by women authors as observed by Biruté Ciplijauskaité in *La novela feminina contemporánea (1970-1985)* come to mind. Like those fictional narrators who were often artists or writers, the poets in *El placer de la escritura o Nuevo retablo de Maese Pedro* chronicle the process of self-discovery through poetry. For them writing *is* identity. As Eloísa Sánchez Barroso explains:

La Poesía . . . es un modo de percibir la vida, una manera de ser y sentir, un estado (de gracia o desgraciado) consustancial a uno mismo: algo que es mío, auténtica y genuinamente mío . . .Escribo como soy . . . empleando la materia prima de la que estoy compuesta. (142)

Inmaculada Moreno likens writing poetry to maintaining a conversation with other poets:

> La poesía no es más que diálogo . . . una lee para no sentirse sola, y escribe para completar esa conversación sin fin que empezó el día que ella leyó unos versos y sintió que esas palabras la aludían. (242)

Likewise, reading the poets of this anthology has the effect of hearing these women converse among themselves, often completing each others´ ideas and reiterating similar themes, like the importance of reading in their artistic and personal trajectories. Indeed, *El placer de la escritura o Nuevo retablo de Maese Pedro*, is largely a celebration of reading: "Una escribe porque lee" (242), Inmaculada Moreno asserts, lauding don Quixote as a reader "que interpreta el mundo y luego actúa" (250).

A guiding idea was for the texts to offer creative interpretations of several of Cervantes´s characters, and as noted in the Epilogue "así de alguna manera, constituir entre todas un nuevo retablo de Maese Pedro" (279).

Consequently, Pilar Pasamar contrasts "las Aldonzas despojadas y muchas de ellas maltratadas" with "las Dulcineas inhibidas evadidas de su tiempo histórico," commending how via the Aldonza-Dulcinea dichotomy Cervantes critiqued male manipulation of women, highlighting "la incomprometida actitud del varón –el de su tiempo--: la de adoración o utilización, y también la del abuso." (35) Pasamar can only hope for the awakening of women´s awareness: as she reflects in the poem "Aldonza se casa": " . . .quiero/Llorar por las que ignoran, por todas las robustas, /Por todas las Aldonzas, por las que nunca sueñan . . ." (38).

Marcela --"la voz de la escritura sumergida,"—is for Josela Maturana an icon of the achievements wrested by women since the time of Cervantes, and she notes that it is essential "que sea una mujer en un período en que dominan los hombres, la que proclame en voz alta su propia elección" (166).

In analyzing the poetic process, Eloisa Sánchez Barroso likens the liberating effect of creating to Melisendra´s rescue –her liberator "no es otro que el poema realizado" (144).

For María Rosa Vicente literature is like "el bálsmo de Fiérabras," –creatively refashioned for individual use as "Rosabrás"—that protects against "la mala literatura" (45). As recreator of the potion, Don Quixote is not only magician and healer, but also cook. Other poets make connections with domestic tasks. Pepa Parra likens poetry to "una labor minuciosa como . . . la de bordadora" (217). Ana Sofía Pérez-Bustamante celebrates the love that emanated from her grandmother as she ironed: "Esa blanda paciencia, tenaz y delicada,/Que es y que no sabe que es caricia" (270).

Verónica Pedemonte, daughter of a Uruguayan poet, and a Spanish mother, also a poet, is particularly attuned to the variations of the Spanish language –its multilinguism and multiculturalism—as expressed in her collection *Dulcinea en Manhattan* (2003). For her, writing is like confronting windmills, struggling with "las aspas del lenguaje" (191).

And Carmen Moreno imitates Don Quixote´s language when she celebrates her poetic vocation:

> Yo no soy alcaide de un Castillo, ni mis doncellas son damas ante las que rendir armas, mas tampoco negaría auxilio a persona que sugre del mal de los versos y camino por el mundo, pensando que un travoador tiene la fuerza de un ejército. (137)

Common to many of these poets, as to the narrators that Ciplijauskaité studied, is the perception that women´s language is often more experimental than that of male authors. Dolors Alberola´s "yo" often expresses herself in the third person; linguistic transgression is a mark of personal and artistic rebellion. While Mercedes Escolano rejects the notion of feminine and "masculine" themes, as well as that of a feminine or masculine vocabulary (86), Eloísa Sánchez Barroso extols the daring nature of women´s expression in no uncertain terms:

> Y está expuesta con más frescura y descaro; forcejea verbalmente hasta liberar el lenguaje, desordena la sintaxis, introduce imágenes nuevas, derriba tabúes atreviéndose a ahondar en la complehidad sexual, rompiendo esquemas y emitiendo impresiones y sensaciones f´sicias y sensoriales (eróticas), desgastadas por el teimpo y el estilo del languaje femenino (148)

Each of the twelve texts alternates between narrative prose and selections from the authors´ poems. Indeed, Pepa Caro reaffirms herself "en el asombro de las palabras" (135) in a text that is almost entirely in verse.

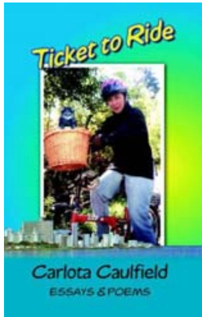
El placer de la escritura o Nuevo retablo de Maese Pedro is to be recommended not just because reading and viewing it is thoroughly enjoyable. For any scholar or student wishing to deepen her knowledge of contemporary poetry by women in Spain, these twelve texts by women of different generations emerge as intensely oral documents. They reflect, as noted in the Epilogue, the different generational currents that

characterized Spanish poetry in the last half of the twentieth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first: from the "intimismo existencial" of the 50´s; to the "poesía sensual, sensorial y neo-erótica" of the 80´s and 90´s; to poetry "de corte más o menos irracionalista, contestatario o rebelde", and finally "la denominada poesía de la experiencia," along with a reawakening at the end of the 90´s of poetry "de conciencia cívica" (281).

If you read this unique anthology you will have to agree with María del Carmen García Tejera´s playful verses of introduction: "Nunca fuera libro alguno/ de damas tan bien leído/ como lo fuera el Quijote/ por el año dos mil cinco" (14)

Francisca González-Arias
University of Massachusetts, Lowell

Publications/Publicaciones



Ticket to Ride by Carlota Caulfield
ISBN: 0-9711-3916-4

Essays and poems, an autobiographical evocation of the author's family history. With translations by Mary G. Berg and Angela McEwan. Hurricane, an imprint of InteliBooks Publishers, 2005.

Summary

Awarded the First Hispanic American International Poetry Prize "Dulce María Loynaz" and other honors, Carlota Caulfield is the author of nine collections of poetry. She lives in the San Francisco Bay Area.

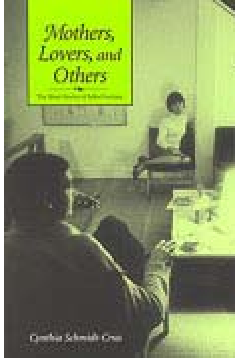
Carlota Caulfield's *Ticket to Ride* of is a collection of poems, essays and interviews. It is an autobiographical evocation of the author's family history, and a beautiful homage to her mother. Written over a period of years --from 1995 to 2005-- these pieces make up a life as it is being lived and imagined. In them we find the poet's playful irony. Caulfield, like her beloved painter Giuseppe Arcimboldo, loves intellectual puzzles.

With *Ticket to Ride*, Carlota Caulfield celebrates her 17 years as an internationally recognized poet of her time, revealing to readers eager to delve into the mystery of the creative enterprise the alchemical sources of her unique voice. --Cecile Pineda, author of *Fishlight: A Dream of Childhood*

Carlota Caulfield's work combines intelligence and charm with a taste for both history and the surreal. Sometimes heartbreaking, often humorous, always passionate, this collection of essays and poems by one of the most imaginative and original Cuban writers displays her captivating versatility and allows us to enter into that special space called "poetry." --Jack Foley, Author of *O Powerful Western Star. Poetry & Art in California*

A "calico woman" indeed, Carlota Caulfield beautifully weaves her diverse ethnic and cultural background, family reminiscences and memories of exile with her love for art, friendship, mystery, and life. *Ticket to Ride*, a lyrical memoir, is at the same time a talented poet's look at a disconcerting world and a magical journey of personal discovery. --Teresa Dovalpage, author of *Posesas de La Habana*

Also by Carlota Caulfield, Quincunce / Quincunx. Translated by Mary G. Berg. Special Book Supplement. Puerto del Sol, Volume 39, Number 1, 2004



Mothers, Lovers, and Others. The Short Stories of Julio Cortázar by Cynthia Schmidt-Cruz
ISBN: 0-7914-5955-1
SUNY series in Latin American and Iberian Thought and Culture

For the Table of Contents and ordering information, see http://www.sunypress.edu/details.asp?id=60859

Summary

Provocative reappraisal of the portrayal of women in Julio Cortázar's short stories.

Using feminist revisions of psychoanalytic thought and cultural studies, *Mothers, Lovers, and Others* examines the pervasive role of the conception of the feminine in the short stories of Argentine writer Julio Cortázar (1914–1984). Contending that his obsession with the mother is the source of Cortázar's uneasiness with femininity, Cynthia Schmidt-Cruz traces an evolution in his relationship to female space, from a convoluted and defensive posture to a more open and tolerant stance, paralleling his increasing political commitment. Schmidt-Cruz explores the role of gender in Cortázar's quest to reconcile his divided allegiance to Argentina and France, and his denunciation of the atrocities of the Argentine military dictatorship.

"No one doubts that Cortázar is one of the most important Latin American authors of the twentieth century. This book is extremely important because it is part of the new readings about Cortázar that are finally tearing to shreds the veil shrouding his fiction. The topic addresses questions central to the field of feminist criticism and shows how much can be added to our perception of literature when the tools devised by feminism are judiciously and intelligently deployed. No other book on Cortázar gives a better understanding of his female characters or of his evolving attitude toward them. Written in the wake of feminist and gender studies, this book increases our realization of the crucial role played by gender in areas such as national identity and political discourse."
— René Prieto, author of *Body of Writing: Figuring Desire in Spanish American Literature*

"Julio Cortázar is one of the most significant writers of the last century. A psychoanalytic approach that appraises the development of his female characters in the light of his personal experience and transformations, without incurring on facile identifications, is extremely central to Cortázar study." — Hortensia R. Morell, Temple University

News/Noticias

Carlota Caulfield was a featured guest at the program AL MEDIODÍA, of TELEMUNDO, Channel 48. May 5, 2005. She spoke about her poetry and her new book of essays and poems *Ticket to Ride.*

She was an invited guest at The San Francisco Center for the Book, This special reading celebrated the exhibition Journey to the Source: Handmade Books from Cuba on its closing day. The Center printed a bilingual letterpress broadsides to honor the occasion. May 6, 2005. She gave a bilingual reading from *Ticket to Ride* in La Casa del Libro of San Francisco. May 18, 2005.

I Congreso Internacional El Quijote en clave de mujer/es

Last Nov. 15-21 in Madrid and Valdepeñas, Spain, scholars from over fifty universities, writers, students and Cervantes aficionados gathered to discuss female representation in Miguel de Cervantes' masterpiece, *Don Quijote de la Mancha* at the First International Conference "El Quijote en clave de mujer/es." Organized by writer-scholar Fanny Rubio, the five-day conference began and ended in Madrid, city in which Cervantes periodically lived. The inauguration included comments from Spain's Minister of Culture, Carmen Calvo, who described the text as "the manual for the human spirit." The majority of sessions took place in the heart of La Mancha, Valdepeñas, and focused on wide-ranging topics from damsels, modern women, and tragic women in *Don Quijote*, to ethics and desire, sexuality, and the current status of the study of women in the text. Presenters, including Dr. Mercedes Alcalá-Galán of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Dr, José Ignacio Díez of Universidad Complutense, Dr. Howard Mancing of Purdue University, Dr. Anne Cruz of the University of Miami, Dr. Dieter Ingenschay of Humboldt Universitat, Dr. Horst Weich of München Universitat, Dr. María Grazia Profeti of Università di Firenze, and Dr. Adrienne Martín of the University of California, developed issues and stimulated discussion about a wide ranging host of themes and female characters—Dulcinea, Marcela, Dorotea, Luscinda, Maritornes, the Duchess, Claudia Jerónima and Ana Féliz, among others. The conference ended at the National Library with homage to two celebrated Spanish writers, Ana María Matute and Nélida Piñon, and a full discussion of *Don Quixote's* effects on and relationship with women writers today.

Carolyn A. Nadeau
Illinois Wesleyan University

España en la encrucijada de 1939: Exilio e identidad cultural

I want to share with you information about an up-coming conference, "España en la encrucijada de 1939: Exilio e identidad cultural" and encourage you to send a paper or

organize a panel. The conference, chaired by Professor Monica Jato, will be held April 7-8, 2006 at University of North Texas at Denton. Abstracts or panel proposals are due on Feb. 15. Possible topics include: "Exilio ed identidad naciona (vasco, catalán, gallego, etc.); Memoria, Olvido e Historia; Dialéctica exilio territorial-exilio interior; Desexilios; Discurso de la Nostalgia y la Contranostalgia; El discurso de América; Mujer y Exilio: Dialéctica de los géneros literarios: autobiografías, diarios, cartas, libros de viajes, etc."

Check out the Conference web page for complete information http://www.forl.unt.edu/ExileConference.htm and share the call-for-papers with other colleagues.

Sharon Ugalde

Announcements/Anuncios

Announcing the publication of EntreMundos/AmongWorlds: New Perspectives on Gloria Anzaldúa – an edited collection of essays and narratives about Gloria Anzaldúa, published by Palgrave Macmillan. Edited by AnaLouise Keating

Highlighting some of Anzaldúa's lesser-explored theories, *EntreMundos/AmongWorlds* invites readers to re-examine Anzaldúa's writings and theorizing from additional perspectives. This collection broadens Anzaldúan scholarship, shifting the conversation in new directions while underscoring the visionary yet pragmatic social-justice dimensions of her work.

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Treasurer's Report

END-YEAR TREASURER'S REPORT 2005

Submitted by Candyce Leonard

A. GENERAL FUND

Previous Balance	$ 6,505.00
Deposits	1,088.00
	$ 7,593.00
Debits (1) web page formatting	$ 175.00
(2) transfer of newsletter materials	29.00
(3) Spring 2004 newsletter	322.00
	$ 526.00
Current General Fund Balance	**$ 7,067.00**

B. SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Previous Balance	$ 2,575.00
Contributions	50.00
Debit: essay contest prize	200.00
Current Scholarship Fund Balance	**$ 2,425**

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