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Metaphors of a Mestiza Consciousness: Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*

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In her seminal text *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldúa constructs a mestiza consciousness as a dynamic “new mythos” capable of breaking down dualistic hegemonic paradigms. Anzaldúa targets paradigms representing culturally determined roles imposed on individuals and peoples from the outside. Failure to conform to such paradigms, Anzaldúa argues, results in the social ostracism of the “transgressors.” In constructing her compelling argument in *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa creates a “mythos” of *Mestizaje* to explore and explode the ways in which socially enforced paradigms are established through surface and conceptual metaphors as well as the ways in which these paradigms seem to label people as acceptable or unacceptable. Anzaldúa asserts in her text that because metaphor has the power to restructure the collective unconscious through both linguistic and visual means, it is therefore possible for her to alter the unconscious of the reading masses with her own metaphorical constructions. Anzaldúa’s position is thus one of both appropriation and resistance.

Combating and incorporating the metaphors and archetypes, particularly serpents that are indigenous to her southwestern homeland as well as her race and her culture/religion, Anzaldúa engages in a dialectical process in order to transcend imposed conceptual boundaries that have made her an outcast. Because many of the metaphors and archetypes she cites are cross-cultural and inter-referential, Anzaldúa’s text necessarily embraces and validates experiences of people from varied cultures, races, classes, and sexual orientations. As a mestiza (a woman of “white, Mexican [and] Indian” descent), and a lesbian and feminist, Anzaldúa redefines *Mestizaje* through what she calls a mestiza conscious-

ness: “a new value system with images and symbols” that may serve to heal the split between “white. . . and colored, . . . male and female” and the hegemonically differentiated “us” and “them” (*Borderlands* 80, 3).

Far beyond figures of speech, metaphors in *Borderlands* serve, in Anzaldúa’s words, as “dominant paradigms. . . [that] are transmitted to us through the culture made by those in power—men” (16). Metaphors, according to theorists Lakoff and Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By*, play “a central role in defining our everyday realities” by structuring the way we think, perceive, and socialize (3). Metaphor in this way *redefines* our individual realities and “helps form social reality” (Wilson 883, my emphasis). For example, in an essay published after the appearance of *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa analyzes images contained in border art and hypothesizes about the cause and pervasive effect of the evolution of patriarchal metaphors: “Through the centuries a culture touches and influences another, passing on its metaphors and its gods before it dies. Metaphors *are* gods. The new culture adopts, modifies, and enriches these images, and it, in turn, passes them on changed. The process is repeated until the original meanings of images are pushed into the unconscious” (“Chicana Artists” 39). Her distinction between metaphors/archetypes/images and their “original meanings” implies two levels of metaphor: surface and conceptual.

The surface level of metaphor is the named, exterior comparison, while the conceptual level is a more fundamental and less obvious comparison upon which the surface metaphor is built. In *More Than Cool Reason*, Lakoff and Turner have identified a list of what they call “basic conceptual metaphors,” those structurally systematic conventions upon which the interpretations of many other expressions and idioms depend (51), including “GOOD IS WHITE, BAD IS BLACK/DARK,” both of which are seen emerging from the serpent metaphors that Anzaldúa describes.

As Anzaldúa intentionally unveils the “original meaning[s]” of surface metaphors, including the serpents outlining her “new value system,” she, perhaps unconsciously, exposes the two “basic conceptual metaphors” about colors/coloring listed by Lakoff and Turner. Anzaldúa reappropriates and subverts both the surface and conceptual metaphors that she sees as foundations for racism, and

in so doing, she thus demonstrates a cultural and psychoanalytic criticism of self and society. She consciously attempts to change the popularized pejorative messages of such metaphors because they serve as destructive, limiting borders of culture and self.

Anzaldúa credits James Hillman's *Re-Visioning Psychology* as "instrumental in the development of [her] thought" concerning archetypes/metaphors (95). Hillman writes:

archetypes tend to be metaphors [,]. . . images. . . [of] *the deepest patterns of psychic-functioning*, the roots of the soul governing the perspectives we have of ourselves and the world. . . . [The archetypal perspective] allows psychological understanding at a collective level . . . [and] dominates our individual choices. . . and ideas.

(xiii-xiv, 131)

By implication, metaphors are imposed upon the individual by the collective unconscious, powerfully influencing the individual's construction of her/himself.

Hillman's assertion that "a psyche with few psychological ideas is easily a victim" may be what guides Anzaldúa's methodology of resistance (118). Using surface metaphors to deploy her psychoanalytic logic, Anzaldúa invokes powerful serpent metaphors drawn from her Indo-Hispanic and Anglo ancestries to construct a representation of a mestiza consciousness. She consciously attempts to change her unconscious by reappropriating and subverting the serpent metaphors within *Borderlands*, thus suggesting her conceptual modifications to her readers and possibly influencing their unconscious.

Foregrounding her exploration of self, Anzaldúa situates herself within a metaphorical borderland, "a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" (*Borderlands* 3). This "vague and undetermined place" is not restricted to physical, geographical spaces, but includes the "psychological," "sexual," and "spiritual" borderlands. These are spaces where the inhabitants, "the prohibited and forbidden," live in a state of discomfort as they negotiate between the conflicting forces in such margins (3). As a mestiza, Anzaldúa feels prohibited in the borderland of the southwestern United States that she describes as a land where "those in power, the whites and those who align themselves with whites" de-legitimize "those who cross

over. . . the confines of the ‘normal’. . . the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato [sic], the half-breed . . .” (3-4). All those outside the category of WHITE/whites (and those who align themselves with them) fall into the BAD IS DARK category. Anzaldúa has identified with the latter group since childhood because her own grandmother disparagingly labeled her by saying: “Too bad mijita was morena, *muy prieta*, so dark and different. . . like an Indian” (“La Prieta” 198). Along the southwest border, Anzaldúa sees that it is the dark-skinned “transgressors, aliens” who are cast out by the gringos/*la migra*/the border patrol (3), reinforcing the institutionalized binary metaphors that fashion racism.

In addition to the dominant white culture, another source of oppression within this geographical borderland is the Chicano culture that requires women to be subservient. As noted earlier in this essay, Anzaldúa asserts that males, as the creators of culture, are the ones who establish the surface and conceptual metaphors upon which cultures are built. She charges that Chicano culture has traditionally restricted Chicanas to the roles of nun, prostitute, or other through the figures of *La Virgen de Guadalupe*,¹ *La Llorona*,² and *La Chingada/Malinche/Malintzin/Malinali*³ (*Borderlands* 17, 22, 27-31, 34). Deviants from this paradigm, such as the homosexuals, have been “burned and beaten” in most cultures, including the Indo-Hispanic and Anglo cultures (*Borderlands* 18). Based upon this moral system, the following conceptual metaphors may be inferred: “good is male” (endowed with power, freedom to choose, unrestricted to specific roles) and “bad is female” (forced into predetermined roles as transmitters of male culture). Anzaldúa rejects these binary conceptual metaphors and has opted for another choice: “[to] enter. . . the world by way of education and career and becoming a self-autonomous person” (17, 19).

Anzaldúa’s decision to dismantle sexist underpinnings encompasses her sexual preference: “Being lesbian and raised Catholic, indoctrinated as straight,” she writes, “*I made the choice to be queer* (for some it is genetically inherent). . . . It is a path of knowledge—one of knowing (and of learning) the history of oppression of our *raza*. It is a way of balancing, of mitigating duality” (*Borderlands* 19). Her path of knowledge and resistance calls for “a conscious rupture with all oppressive traditions of all

cultures and religions” and a reinterpretation “of history. . . using new symbols. . . [creating] new myths. . . adopt[ing] new perspectives toward the darkskinned, women, and queers” (82). By subverting and transforming the old symbols that embody the conceptual metaphors fashioning racism and sexism, Anzaldúa hopes to empower the “outcasts” including herself.

Anzaldúa maps her path of resistance and empowerment against GOOD IS WHITE/male, BAD IS DARK/female through the evolution, reinterpretation, and recreation of serpent metaphors. She constructs her psyche by inter-referencing metaphors from more than two cultures and thus avoids defining ethnicity in a binary system. This type of cultural inter-reference has been identified by anthropologist Michael M.J. Fischer as a recurrent feature in autobiographical writings of ethnic Americans that “provide[s] reservoirs for renewing humane values” (201). By allowing multiple voices to contribute to the complexity and ambiguity of a mestiza consciousness, Anzaldúa also achieves an effect identified by political scientist Jane Flax as the goal of psychoanalysis, feminist theory, and postmodern philosophy: “to understand and (re)-constitute the self, gender, knowledge, social relations, and culture without resorting to linear, teleological, hierarchical, holistic, or binary ways of thinking and being” (622). Anzaldúa’s process involves calling up the serpent metaphors from Native and Western cultures noted above, tracing their evolution through time and across cultures, and reflecting the shifts in the hierarchy of power from women to men and from Native to Western epistemologies.

An example of Anzaldúa’s inter-referencing of Native and Western images occurs in her identification of *Coatl* from the matriarchal Olmec culture, a serpent whose significance and symbolism is obviously “older than Freud” (*Borderlands* 26). The Olmecs believed *Coatl* to be a “sacred. . . refuge, the creative womb from which all things were born and to which all things returned. . . . The destiny of humankind is to be devoured by the Serpent” (34). In this case, the destiny to be devoured is a positive image, a return to a safe place where unrestricted potential and possibility originate. Anzaldúa describes her experience of being “devoured” by the descendent of *Coatl*, *Coatlicue*, the Meso-American serpent that is half male, half female. Anzaldúa’s

devouring (as both subject and object) was brought about through a mirror. By gazing, scrutinizing, and judging a reflection of her own face and “an otherworld Serpent. . . the symbol of the instinctual in its collective, impersonal, prehuman[ity]. . . the dark sexual drive, the chthonic (underworld), the feminine,” while simultaneously being frozen and possessed by them, Anzaldúa recognizes that the embodiment of “*un caracter multiplice*” can serve either as a “barrier against the world” or a vehicle for greater “awareness” and “knowledge” of the world and self (35, 42, 44). After this devouring, Anzaldúa “‘fell’ into the underworld” and bore “the mark of the Beast” (42, 46-48). Her experience was initially a frightening one because she realized that she was not fully in control of her body, mind, and soul. Anzaldúa was afraid that beneath her physical exterior was a mere fragment of a powerful beast: “a lion’s or witch’s or serpent’s head” (43). She later realizes that what she feared was a truth that initiates “an evolution of soul,” a dynamic, unsettling, and ultimately beneficial process of self-discovery (47).

Anzaldúa’s references to “the mark of the Beast” and to “Serpent” images serve to transform allusions to male constructs representing evil and knowledge in Judeo-Christian mythology. Dissatisfied with and disempowered by these representations, Anzaldúa reappropriates and reinscribes the beast and serpent and their representations within psychologist Carl Jung’s “Shadow” figure: Anzaldúa’s “Shadow-beast” becomes a concept representing forbidden inner knowledge recognized by the “supra-human,” god-like parts of ourselves (*Borderlands* 16, 20, 37, 42, 44). She alleges that its forbidden status is a societal encumbrance that serves to limit human potential.

As reflections of the societies from which they came, the serpents mirror the development of socially constructed gender roles and the apprehension of voice and knowledge by patriarchal forces. By naming the sources of her oppression in the cultures and archetypes that characterize her heritage, Anzaldúa claims to effect her liberation. The “dynamics” of the inter-references provide the space for “renewal” (Fischer 201) and “transcend[ence]”: it allows “the wound caused by the serpent to be healed by the serpent” (*Borderlands* 46).

The wounds of the serpent are first inflicted through displacement from the homeland. Anzaldúa problematizes the historical flux between the United States and Mexico by mythologizing a version of history that shows Indo-Hispanic culture taking responsibility for its divisiveness, rather than alleging victimization. She begins *Borderlands/La Frontera* by asserting that the Aztecs are “the Chicanos’ ancient Indian ancestors. . . [who] migrated through, or permanently occupied, the Southwest, *Aztlán*—land of the herons, land of *whiteness*, the *Edenic* place of origin of the Azteca” (4, my emphasis). *Huitzilopochtli*, God of War, guided the Aztecs from *Aztlán* to what later became Mexico City, “the place . . . where an eagle with a writhing serpent in its beak perched on a cactus” (5).

The eagle and the serpent exemplify the division of spirituality and sexuality that had existed as one in *Coatlicue*, the goddess who created *Huitzilopochtli*:

The eagle symbolizes the spirit (as the sun, the father); the serpent symbolizes the soul (as the earth, the mother). Together, they symbolize the struggle between the spiritual/celestial/male and the underworld/earth/feminine. The symbolic sacrifice of the serpent to the “higher” masculine powers indicates that the patriarchal order had already vanquished the feminine and matriarchal order in pre-Columbian America. (*Borderlands* 5)

Once the Aztec-Mexica settled in their new location, their ruler “*Itzcoatl*, destroyed all the painted documents. . . and rewrote a mythology that validated the wars of conquest and. . . the shift from a tribe based on clans to one based on classes” (32).

Anzaldúa theorizes that an even more radical change in the Aztec society came when “the four. . . lords of royal lineage picked the king’s successor from his siblings or male descendents,” thus transforming the civilization from a matrilineal to a patriarchal one (33). The Aztecs conquered other tribes, raping their women and levying heavy taxes upon the subjugated peoples. Anzaldúa implies that the Aztec rulers’ abuse of the women especially angered the conquered tribes, contributing to their refusal to unite “to defend the city” against the Spanish. Anzaldúa thus asserts that “the Aztec nation fell. . . because the ruling elite had subverted the solidarity between men and women,” as signified by the sacrifice

of the serpent to the eagle, “and between noble and commoner” (34). Therefore, the “good is male, bad is female” conceptual metaphors of sexism/patriarchy preceded the GOOD IS WHITE, BAD IS DARK metaphors of racism. Anzaldúa thus alleges that sexism, as evidenced by the annihilation of the matriarchal system and violation of the women of the conquered tribes, weakened the Aztecs (precursors to the Mexican and mestizo cultures) and contributed to the civilization’s fall to outside domination.

Anzaldúa’s reference to Aztlán as a fallen Eden brings to mind another serpent metaphor from the Judeo-Christian tradition that affirms displacement from homeland and the establishment of patriarchy. In Genesis, the serpent in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil entices Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, leading to her banishment and that of Adam from the Garden. Eve’s deception by the serpent has been used to justify the subjugation of women in the Judeo-Christian tradition. For Eve’s weakness, woman is condemned to experience sexual desire for her husband, painful childbirths, and subjugation by her husband (Gen. 3.16). Adam was reprimanded for “hearkening to the voice of [his] wife,” and sentenced to work and eat from the earth that bore thorns and thistles (Gen. 3.16). The Creator, the Serpent, and the husband are male and share the responsibility of castigating the woman physically, sexually, and intellectually. The paradigm creates enmity not only between woman and man, but between woman and God and woman and serpent, the symbol of the inner voice or instinct that yearns for the forbidden fruit, whether it be knowledge, immortality, sexuality, etc. The sin that Eve committed “was attempting to become knowledgeable. . . [and] immortal” and sharing that knowledge with her partner (Allen 58). Woman’s punishment is more severe than that of man since she is additionally forced into a position of silence while enduring man’s penalty of exile. Because Adam was punished for hearkening to Eve’s voice, the voice of woman is rebuked and revoked. Anzaldúa’s reference to Eden alludes to the story of the fall and its establishment of patriarchal power within her cultures through Catholicism and organized religions that “encourage fear and distrust” among the collective and within the self (*Borderlands* 16-19, 37).

The Aztec and Judeo-Christian serpents represent the source of Anzaldúa’s discomfort in the Southwest, the same space she has

referred to as Aztlán and Eden where the “*atravesados*” (those of a mixed or crossed breed) including herself are prohibited (*Borderlands* 3). She reinterprets the serpent metaphors as sites of and vehicles for resistance. As a woman, she protests being physically threatened: restrained/beaten/raped by and sacrificed to a man (eagle, gringo, coyote); as a lesbian, she does not desire a husband; and as a feminist, she refuses to be silenced, deprived of instinct and knowledge, and dominated by men, culture, and religion. The “Shadow-Beast,” a derived serpent, represents her rebellion against institutionalized sexism and racism.

Anzaldúa appropriates and adapts the Shadow, one of the six archetypal elements that Jung termed as “the structural components of the personality” (Hillman 22). Jung’s Shadow, falling within the BAD IS DARK metaphor, is “a concealed counterpersonality [that] we wrestle with. . . and keep in the dark; he must shadow our life with his surreptitious intentions” (Hillman 22). Anzaldúa’s version combines him with the Beast, possibly a reference to the Serpent who in Genesis 3.16 is described as “the most subtle of the beasts” and certainly a reference to *Coatlícue*, who devoured Anzaldúa, leaving behind “the mark of the Beast” (*Borderlands* 42).

Anzaldúa confronts the Shadow-Beast who has “lidless serpent eyes, her cold clammy moist hand dragging [her] underground, fangs bared and hissing” because, on the beast’s face, Anzaldúa has “uncovered the lie” (*Borderlands* 20). The beast reveals to her that it was not the Chicana’s dark Indian ancestor, *Malinalli/Malintzin/Malinche*, who betrayed her Indian culture and caused its fall to the Spanish through Cortés (20). Chicano culture holds *La Malinche* primarily responsible for the defeat of the Aztec empire, while Anzaldúa recognizes sexism/patriarchy and classism as the causes for its vulnerability to the Spanish. To trace the source of misplaced blame, she reexamines the current-day binary figures of *La Malinche* and her good mother double, *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, and their influence on Chicano culture. Their creation is informed by and parallels the evolution of serpent metaphors, all reflecting the imminent conceptual metaphors of sex and color beginning with *Coatl*.

Coatl, *La Vibora*, or Snake Woman, whom Anzaldúa describes as “older than Freud and older than gender (pre-Judeo-Christian),”

represents human and animal physicality and “the animal soul” (*Borderlands* 26). In addition to symbolizing human and beast, *Coatl* also stands for womanhood because her mouth, “guarded by rows of dangerous teeth,” represents a “vagina dentate” (34). Her figure is a rejection of “traditional phallogocentric values” for an “alternate description. . . of reality which affirm[s] the female experience” (DuPlessis, Frye, Rubenstein, Walker, Greene as cited by Keating 74).

Coatl inhabits Anzaldúa’s psychological borderlands. This Serpent, “a cobra, the size of the room,” appears before Anzaldúa and “expand[s] her hood” over her. Established before the disparaging connotations of DARK and female, *Coatl* is recognized by Anzaldúa as “the symbol of the dark sexual drive, the chthonic (underworld), the feminine, the serpentine movement of sexuality, of creativity, the basis of all energy and life” (*Borderlands* 35). *Coatl*’s role, then, is similar to that of the male serpent in Genesis who tempts Eve with knowledge of immortality and sexuality, but *Coatl* represents female power rather than male manipulation and man’s evil. *Coatl*’s symbolism is also antithetical to Freud’s classification of the serpent as the “most important symbol of the male organ” (Freud 357). Anzaldúa’s inter-referencing of Native, Western, and Judeo-Christian metaphors reflects the colliding forces at work within the Chicano culture and her own unconscious. In the history of this collision, an entity exists that embodies the conflicts and contradictions of a system of binaries, such as male/female, eagle/serpent, spiritual/physical, life/death, god/human: *Coatlícue*.

Coatlícue (Serpent Skirt) was descended from *Coatl* and had “a human skull or serpent for a head, a necklace of human hearts, a skirt of twisted serpents and taloned feet” (*Borderlands* 27). She “represents a fusion of opposites: the eagle and the serpent, heaven and the underworld, life and death,” and male and female (47). *Coatlícue* achieved the balance that Anzaldúa would like to reconstruct from the collision of forces in her own consciousness. This balance is also personified within Anzaldúa’s description of the modern day figure of the “half and half” (*mita’ y mita’*) who lived near her home, representing the predicament of queer people as subjects of societal judgment. For “six months she [the “half and half”] was a woman who had a vagina that bled once a month, and

. . . for the other six months she was a man, had a penis and she peed standing up” (19). Represented by *Coatlicue* and the “half and half,” homosexuals are condemned as deviants, yet, contends Anzaldúa, they are held in awe for their power to contain “the coming together of opposite qualities within” (19). Anzaldúa maintains that this power serves as a means of compensation and transcendence from societies bound by their limiting, moral boundaries.

As a queer person, Anzaldúa claims to be “both male and female” and therefore to have access to different worlds, just as the “half and half” and *Coatlicue* do (*Borderlands* 19). Those judging and criticizing the quality of multiplicity as abnormal or deformed suffer from “an absolute despot duality that says we are able to be only one or the other,” thus restricting human nature from “evolv[ing] into something better” (19). The power of the serpentine entities to embody multiplicity is feared by those constructing and constrained by the hegemonic “good is male, bad is female” metaphors. This fear results in the desire to destroy the minority who are different. For example, the wholeness and power of *Coatlicue* in the earlier Olmec culture was fragmented and disempowered by the “male-dominated Azteca-Mexica culture” (27). The Azteca-Mexica culture splintered *Coatlicue* into several goddesses and weakened them by

giving them monstrous attributes and by substituting male deities in their place. . . . They divided her who had been complete, who possessed both upper (light) and underworld (dark) aspects. *Coatlicue*, the Serpent goddess, and her more sinister aspects, *Tlazolteotl* and *Cihuacoatl*, were “darkened” and disempowered. . . [and] *Tonantsi*—split from her dark guises—became the good mother. (27)

The split is significant as the first move toward compounding “bad is female” by adding color: bad is female/WHITE, worse is female/DARK. The division lent itself to appropriation by Catholicism after the Spanish conquest. After that point, the balanced coexistence between good and evil and between light and dark was no longer acceptable within society nor the individual. Evil/knowledge/instinct became something to be eradicated according to the history and the evolution of the serpent metaphors and their derivations.

The Spanish Conquest brought about many changes in what is now Mexico and the southwestern United States, including the indoctrination of the Indians into Catholicism, which contributed to the continued adaptation of the serpent archetypes. Mexican folk-Catholicism appropriated and modified the female serpent deities from the Olmec and Aztec/Mexica cultures. *Tonantsi*, one of the splits of *Coatlatlopeuh* or *Coatlaxopeuh* (pronounced homophonously to *Guadalupe*: “cuatlashupe” and meaning “the one who is one with the beasts”), a later version of *Coatlícue*, became the *Virgen de Guadalupe* (*Borderlands* 27-29). According to Anzaldúa, the last version of *Guadalupe* became “desexed” when the “serpent/sexuality” of *Coatlatlopeuh* was removed. According to legend, “*Nuestra Señora María de Coatlatlopeuh* [*Guadalupe*]” appeared before Juan Diego, “*El-que-habla-como-un-águila* [He who speaks like an eagle], . . . on the spot where the Aztec goddess, *Tonantsi* (“Our Lady Mother”) had been worshipped by the Nahuas” (28). This is yet another echo of the split between the eagle and serpent that marked the arrival of the Aztec-Mexica tribe in Mexico City. *Guadalupe* became the central religious figure in Mexico. She is seen as the mediator between “the Spanish and the Indian cultures,” “the Chicanos and the white world,” and “the human and the divine” (30). She represents the virgin in the *virgen/puta* split and paradoxically embodies the options of nun and mother in Chicano culture.

Guadalupe’s role as a positive mediator is contrasted by the role that the *Malinali/Malintzín/Malinche* figure is thought to have played in the Spanish conquest; she is *Guadalupe*’s “monstrous double” (Alarcón 58). *La Malinche*, who served as a translator and bore Cortés’ children, was seen as a traitor and whore by the Aztecs for selling out to Cortés and the Spanish. She was “perceived as speaking for herself and not the community” and to have “betrayed her primary cultural function—maternity” (Alarcón 63). Like Eve, *La Malinche* is intellectually and sexually dominated by man, and is held up as the prostitute that Chicanas will become if they fail to become nuns or mothers. The politics in this binary system repulse Anzaldúa. Castigated for their voices and sexuality, Eve and *La Malinche*, claims Anzaldúa, are scapegoats for the divisions created by the men/cultures themselves, divisions leading to the fall of those men/cultures.

Anzaldúa's interpretations of the current-day Mexican-Catholic folk figures are informed by the appropriation, transformation, and division of the older pagan serpentine figures, while her references to Eden, Freud, and Jung allude to a separate group of male serpents; all influence her syncretic construction of the Shadow-Beast. She therefore goes beyond what AnnLouise Keating observes as "reclaiming and reinterpreting the figure of Coatlicue. . . [to] invent an image of female identity" (82). Anzaldúa manipulates the serpentine surface metaphors to change the basic conceptual metaphors affirming racism and sexism within humanity. In this manner, she accomplishes what critic Joan W. Scott has called "historiciz[ing] the question of identity. . . to introduce. . . an analysis of constructions of power" (16).

Anzaldúa rebels against the patriarchal constructions of power with her Shadow-beast, defying what culture, religion, and the conscious mind have labeled as taboo (*Borderlands* 37). Embedded within her psyche are the androgynous serpents, who have the power to exist in a state of ambiguity and mitigate duality, coexisting with the male serpents that attempt to oppress her. Another weapon Anzaldúa wields against repressive forces is *la facultad*:

a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning. . . . It is an acute awareness mediated by the part of the psyche that does not speak, that communicates in images and symbols which are the faces of feelings. . . behind which feelings reside/hide. . . . [*La facultad*] takes one from one's habitual grounding, causes the depths to open up, causes a shift in perception. (38, 39)

Anzaldúa claims this faculty is unknowingly developed more fully in oppressed peoples and those "caught between worlds," as a "survival tactic." It is a hyper-awareness to "sense the rapist when he's five blocks down the street," thus posing the risk of being dismissed as prejudice in the eyes of society. For Anzaldúa, *la facultad* is a legitimate source of knowledge that provides a space where "a break in one's defenses. . . resistance. . . [and] habitual grounding. . . causes a shift in perception" (39). Together, the Shadow-Beast and *la facultad* create a mestiza consciousness that allows one to reclaim one's voice and instinct (the animal soul) in order to name a source or potential source of oppression, even within one's own psyche. Therefore, a mestiza consciousness also

serves as a mode of self-critique. Anzaldúa asserts that by trusting this darker mode of understanding, innocence and the bliss of ignorance are lost.

The painful path of knowledge that Anzaldúa has chosen to take in critiquing her ancestral cultures and herself furnishes a feminist slant on her use of metaphor. By analyzing and synthesizing, differentiating and integrating the serpent metaphors on an individual and societal level, Anzaldúa's acts of rebellion and (re)creation may be seen as a self-reflexive process of becoming knowledgeable and reclaiming voice and sexuality (Hillman 70, Lugones 36). With an awareness that the process is both self-reflexive and collective, "each act of solitary rebellion and creation is anchored in and responsive to a collective. . . resistance" (Lugones 36). Anzaldúa strips away the surface metaphors that camouflage the "wounds," the underlying conceptual metaphors, in order to redeem and reclaim voice, instinct, intellect, and sexuality. These are qualities that she implies should be denied to no one, and thus she uncovers a space not only for those who have traditionally been cast out, but for all of humanity. Anzaldúa's text functions in the same manner that she has observed in other border art forms: it "adopts, modifies, and enriches" old systems of metaphor, and "passes them on changed" ("Chicana Artists" 39). Her serpentine Shadow-Beast is a reappropriation, a reinscription, and most importantly, a synthesis of the older metaphors that negatively label or exclude women, the darkskinned, and homosexuals. The Shadow-Beast reflects Anzaldúa's attempt to create an all-inclusive, symbiotic metaphor that initiates redemption by deconstructing the underlying conceptual metaphors.

Notes

1. *La Virgen de Guadalupe* is regarded as the patroness and, according to Anzaldúa, the most prominent "religious figure" of Mexico, Central America, and parts of the U.S. Southwest (*Borderlands* 29). West cites Sahagún's *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* in describing the miracle of her appearance: "a lady appeared to a lowly Indian, Juan Diego, in December 1531 on a hill outside Mexico City—a hill sacred to the worship of Tonantzín, an Indian 'Mother of Heaven' cult figure. The lady told Juan that she wanted a chapel built on that spot, and sent him to inform the bishop. As might be expected, Bishop Zumárraga doubted that the Virgin would use such a lowly

messenger and asked for a sign. When Juan returned to the hill, the lady received the bishop's reply and told the Indian to take his *tilma* (cape) and gather up the roses that had appeared on the rocky hillside—in cold December—and carry them to the bishop. When the load of roses tumbled out on the floor before the bishop, the *tilma's* rough surface contained a picture of the Virgin—and the sign was received as genuine” (Sahagún 481, qtd. in West 68). *Guadalupe* assisted in converting the Indians to Christianity although they “often confused her with Tonantzin” (West 270) whom Anzaldúa refers to as *Tonantsi*.

2. *La Llorona* (the woman who cries), according to legends, is a ghostly mother searching for her children. In various versions of the story, she is described as a peasant girl, usually named María, who fell in love with an upper-class man, bore him several children, and temporarily shared a happy life and home with him. The man, under pressure from his parents, married a woman of his class, but assured María and the children as he left that he would continue to take care of them and visit them. Overcome with rage and despondency, María drowned her children and herself. According to West, when María's soul “applied for admission to Heaven, El Señor (the Lord) refused her entry. ‘Where are your children?’ He asked her. . . . Go and bring them here. . . . You cannot rest until they are found” (75-76). Her restless soul is condemned to find the children so she weeps and calls out as she searches rivers and/or bodies of water for their lost souls. *La Llorona* is often linked with *La Malinche*, an Indian woman who serves as a translator and lover to Cortés or a Spanish nobleman, who leaves her for an aristocratic Spanish woman. Anzaldúa describes *La Llorona* as “a combination of” *La Virgen de Guadalupe* and *La Malinche*, with the motherhood aspect emphasized (*Borderlands* 30).

3. *La Chingada* [which translates as “the fucked one” according to Anzaldúa (*Borderlands* 22) and “the raped one” according to Poniatowska (51)], *La Malinche*, *Malintzin*, and *Malinali Tenepat* all refer to the Aztec mistress of and translator for Hernan Cortés. For her role and relationship to Cortés, Mexican and Chicano/a culture often name her as the traitor and whore who caused the Aztecs' fall to the Spanish. She represents the epitome of evil and darkness in women, linguistically and sexually betraying her people.

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