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Epistemology, Ontology, and Poetics in Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

Gloria Anzaldúa (1942-2004), a Mexican-American, who grew up in Rio Grande Valley, Texas, was a scholar in Feminism, Queer Theory, and Postcolonialism. In her collection of essays and poetry *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Anzaldúa develops the idea of “the *new mestiza/o*” and “new higher consciousness,” defining the hybridity in her epistemology of the “*mestiza/o* consciousness,” as well as, defining her ontological beliefs, which shared values from Western philosophy and indigenous spirituality. Anzaldúa’s explicative studies on the ancestral homeland for Chicano/as, cultural movements, cultural materialism in indigenous cultures, linguistic revolutions, spirituality, and methods in values, are divided into seven sections from the first half of *Borderlands / La Frontera: The Mestiza*: “The Homeland, Aztlán / *El Otro Mexico*,” (The other Mexico), “*Movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan*,” (Movements in Rebellion and the Cultures who Betray), “Entering the Serpent,” “*La Herencia de Coatlicue / The Coatlicue*,” (The Inheritance of Coatlicue), “How to Tame a Wild Tongue,” “*Tlilli, Tlapalli / The Path of the Red and Black Ink*,” and “La conciencia de la mestiza / Towards a New Consciousness” (The Awareness of the Mestiza). Each section contains heavy rhetorical responses to the systemic institutions that impose racism, classism, misogyny, homophobia, and other forms of oppression that target the political identity of an individual and of the collective community that the individual is represented by. The second half of Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands* is a six-section collection of poetry: “*Más antes en los ranchos*” (Much Before the Ranches), “*La Pérdida*” (The Lost Girl), “*Crossers y otros atravesados*” (and Others Traversed), “*Cihuatlyotl, Woman Alone*,” “*Animas*,” and “*El Retorno*” (The Return). The hybrid text is a

physical representation of *mestizaje*, a hybrid text discussing cultural hybridity. Her purpose is to validate the complex experience of a body living between two cultures. Anzaldúa is creating an entire mythology with unique linguistic features, adding details about the politics of her time and place during the creation of the text (1987), to articulate the paradox of living as Mexican-American in the United States. Specifically, Anzaldúa discusses living as Mexican-American in what she considers the *borderlands*, or border states. The border states are those that were taken by the United States through the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, during the United States-Mexican War of 1848. The significance of living as a Mexican-American in the *borderlands* is that neither Mexican tradition and culture, nor Anglo-American tradition and culture, fully accept the hybrid Mexican-American. Anzaldúa names the hybrid Mexican-American *the new mestiza/o* because of the cultural acceptance in knowing that Mexican people (and those of South America) share ancestry with both Spanish Europeans and indigenous people of the Americas; but, because *the new mestiza/o* shares the cultural transaction of values, ethics, and experiences with Anglo-Americans, the *new mestiza/o* begins to internalize a “new consciousness,” created out of the cultural exchanges between Mexican and Anglo-American history. The significance in Anzaldúa’s work is the cultural phenomena in explaining the paradox in living between two cultures, where the *mestiza/o* body is living in the United States, but is denied the social recognition of being a full-citizen of the country, and is not culturally recognized for their Mexican heritage by the country south of the border. My interest in Gloria Anzaldúa lies in her theorization on the *border culture*, and how the *mestiza/o* is culminated between Mexican heritage and Anglo-American culture, and is defined by her retellings of indigenous mythology, evolution of language, significant political movements for Chicana/os in the United States, her personal spiritual beliefs, and the significance she had on those who accepted her theories on the

*new mestiza/o*. I will discuss sections of her collection, along with her poem “Interface,” which I feel is most representative of her beliefs in the bridging between the physical body and spiritual plane, as well as her bridging between Western and indigenous epistemology and ontology.

To begin, Gloria Anzaldúa begins her investigative theorization of the borderlands and people residing within the border in her section titled “The Homeland, Aztlán / El otro México.” Anzaldúa defines the definitive purpose of a border:

The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* (is an open wound) where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture. Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. [...] A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition (25).

Anzaldúa begins with a metaphor, comparing the border as an “*herida abierta*” (open wound), instilling the image of violence that a border causes, from the inception of the geographical divide, and throughout the stability of the border. The violence of the geographical divide, seen in the image of the “wound,” “[hemorrhaging]”, “the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country,” indicates an instability looming over the new life bred from the brutal image. The idea that a border creates the dichotomy between people and areas deemed “safe” and “unsafe,” begs the question: where does that leave the people, who inhabit the area within the border, between the “safe” and “unsafe?” Anzaldúa’s absence of the question leaves room for her to define the arriving border culture, which begins to dismantle any dichotomous relationship between Mexican culture and Anglo-American culture. To say the “borderland is a vague and undetermined place” is to let the reader know that the “borderland” is open for self-definition.

The people who inhabit the area of the “borderland” identify themselves, adopting the similarities from both cultures surrounding the border, while breeding new differences from the contradicting similarities. A border is always in “constant transition,” since land is never fixed to an owner, or country, and as Anzaldúa gets further into her theorization, she explains how the consciousness grows from the environment, and people who share the experiences aligned with hers, are often associated with the characteristics of “borderland” people.

In thinking about how consciousness moves from environment, Martina Koegeler-Abdi’s “Shifting Subjectivities: Mestizas, Nepantleras, and Gloria Anzaldúa’s Legacy,” considers the internalization and movement of consciousness within a body that experiences a different standpoint epistemology than the one Anzaldúa is methodizing (72). That is, Gloria Anzaldúa’s first chapter “The Homeland, Aztlán / *El Otro Mexico*” is beginning with the inception of the “border” to begin narrating the history of who she names the “*new mestiza/o*,” which represents the political identity of Chicana/os. The purpose of creating a history for the “*new mestiza/o*” is to consider the complex traditions and customs that arise from the borderlands; and to that end, Anzaldúa works in empowering the Chicana/os (the “*new mestiza/o*”) of the borderlands. Koegeler-Abdi’s conversation considers the juxtaposition between the opening chapter “The Homeland, Aztlán / *El Otro Mexico*” and the last chapter of Anzaldúa’s collection of essays “*La Conciencia de la mestiza / Towards a New Consciousness*,” where Anzaldúa shifts from discussing her epistemology of the “*new mestiza/o*” to her theory of “*nepantla*,” her ontological beliefs. Gloria Anzaldúa’s ontology begins with the metaphysical concept of Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos, who began the philosophical conversation of the *mestiza/o* from the hybridity between Spanish colonizers, indigenous people of the Americas, and African people. Vasconcelos’s terms his concept of the hybrid *mestiza/o* “*la raza cósmica*” (the cosmic

race), “a fifth race embracing the four major races of the world” (99). Gloria Anzaldúa adds to Vasconcelo’s theorization:

At the confluence of two or more genetic streams, with chromosomes constantly ‘crossing over,’ this mixture of races, rather than resulting in an inferior being, provides hybrid progeny, a mutable, more malleable species with a rich gene pool. From this racial, ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollinization, an ‘alien’ consciousness is presently in the making—a *new mestiza* consciousness, *una conciencia de mujer* [(an awareness of womanhood)]. It is a consciousness of the Borderlands (99).

For starters, the ideology behind “*la raza cósmica*” is grounded in the ideology of white supremacy, carrying the undertones of a superiority complex, where the belief makes a stance in biology and claims, the mixing of races would make an individual far more superior than an individual who only inhabits one race. Anzaldúa appears to only be borrowing the idea of hybridity to form a cultural assessment of how an individual can inhabit and cross more than one culture. She explains her position on the concept in her poem “*Una lucha de fronteras / A Struggle of Borders*,” which follows the previous prose section:

Because I am in all cultures at the same time,  
*alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro,*  
 [(soul inside two worlds, three, four,)]  
*me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio*  
 [(my head races with the contradictions)] (ll. 4-6).

Anzaldúa speaks with the “I” that is exercising an ontological introspection, subjectivity, and as well as an “I” that is representative of the collective “self,” representing the hybridity of the *mestiza/o*. For Anzaldúa, cultural hybridity is not exclusive to biological race, but the socialization of an individual or group, meaning that anyone can access *mestizaje*, or the mixing of culture. Furthermore, Anzaldúa states: “In a constant state of mental nepantlism, an Aztec

word meaning torn between ways, *la mestiza* is a product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another,” signifying an ideal where the transference between values, beliefs, and customs can be exchanged between cultures (100). To extend on Anzaldúa’s ideal, Koegeler-Abdi comments: “Her conquest was to destabilize foundations of identities such as ethnic, gender, sexual, and other clear-cut standpoints as foundations of identities actually contradicts the possibility of fixed epistemological or political standpoints” (74). To criticize *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* for the recurring moments of contradictory belief systems is fair, as it was Anzaldúa’s purpose to highlight the complexities of existing in a body where an individual and group simultaneously cross between cultures, to the point that the cross becomes its own cultural standpoint. To say, Anzaldúa’s hybrid text is exhibiting a contradictory relationship between her methodization of *mestizaje* and her spiritual belief in *nepantla*, is to pit the two in an unfair dichotomous relationship.

Before moving further into a conversation with Koegeler-Abdi’s “Shifting Subjectivities: Mestiza, Nepantleras, and Gloria Anzaldúa’s Legacy,” I want to discuss exactly how Gloria Anzaldúa’s *new mestiza/o* exemplifies a culturally accepted paradox of “self.” Gloria Anzaldúa’s purpose of the beginning stages of her epistemology of the *new mestiza* is to empower women living in the borderlands. Her third chapter “Entering Into the Serpent” is referencing Aztec mythology, to trace the transformation of tradition and culture due to Spanish colonization. She references the transformation of the Roman Catholic saint widely recognized in veneration practices in Mexican culture, *La Virgin de Guadalupe*, from the Indian name *Coatlaopeuh*. Anzaldúa notes the earlier variations of *Coatlaopeuh*, known as “*Coatilcue*, or ‘serpent skirt,’” and *Tonantsi*, who attempted to resolve the Aztec’s ritual of human sacrifice (49). The etymology of *Coatlaopeuh*’s name is broken down, making sense of her role: “*Coatly* is the

Nahuatl word for serpent. *Lopeuh* means ‘the one who has dominion over serpents.’ [Anzaldúa interprets] this as ‘the one who is at one with the beasts’” (51). The significance of *Coatalopeuh* is that the connotations associated with the her “dominion over serpents” relate to the devil, as the Roman Catholic bible represents the “snake” in the Garden of Eden as the one who tempts Eve into committing sin, betraying God. *Coatalopeuh* turned *Virgen de Guadalupe* changes the connotations associated with the deity, making *La Virgen de Guadalupe* submissive and subservient to the patriarchal order in Christian theology, God. Anzaldúa notes that *La Virgen de Guadalupe* is “the symbol of ethnic identity and of the tolerance for ambiguity that Chicanos-mexicanos, people of mixed race, people who have Indian blood, people who cross cultures, by necessity possess,” meaning the symbol of the indigenous people continues to survive, despite the colonization of the Aztec culture (52). Anzaldúa recognizes what appears to be an opposition between the assimilation of *La Virgen de Guadalupe* from *Coatalopeuh*, adding: “*Guadalupe* has been used by the Church to mete out institutionalized oppression: to placate the Indians and *mexicanos* and Chicanos [...] *Guadalupe* [makes] us docile and enduring, *la chingada* (the screwed) to make us ashamed of our Indian side” (53). The relationship shifts from *Coatalopeuh* representing the deity with the “dominion over snakes,” symbolizing sexual freedom, and liberty as a woman, while *Guadalupe* symbolizes the obedient and graceful. The transformation shows a process of assimilation, testing the endurance of the deity’s symbolic presence, yet what is not specified is why the need for her to survive is a necessity.

Monica Pearles’s “On *Borderlands / La Frontera*: Gloria Anzaldúa and Twenty-Five Years of Research on Gender in the Borderlands” offers insight from historian Emma Perez, who utilizes her theory “decolonial imaginary,” to explain the endurance of the symbolic

transformation and likeness between *Coatlopeuh* and Guadalupe, as well as Mexican-American women:

By reading against the grain of standard narratives (largely a product of colonialism), [Perez] finds a method to show that ‘Chicana, Mexicana, India, *mestiza*, actions, words spoken and unspoken, survive and persist whether acknowledged or not (165).

The transformation and survival of *Guadalupe* from *Coatlopeuh* subverts the notion that the “Church [metes] out institutionalized oppression,” because *Coatlopeuh*’s symbolic representation hides underneath the mask of *Guadalupe*, revealing the identity of the *India*, who represents the sexual liberation and freedom that *Guadalupe* tries to suffocate with the Church’s forced symbolism. Perales is making a point to show that the Chicana, Mexicana, India, and *mestiza* reinvent their personas for survival, because it is necessary, as if to say the limitations brought on from subservience is a limited imposition. The oppositional binary no longer exists because the idea of *Coatlopeuh* existing underneath a mask as *Guadalupe* is an entirely new identity in its own right. Anzaldúa’s “Entering the Serpent” is a methodization of *mestiza* womanhood, displaying how Chicanas, Mexicans, Indias, and *mestizas* wear masks to survive, hiding a resilient persona underneath the supposed obedient guise. Anzaldúa empowers women who share the cultural hybridity of existing in an Anglo-evangelical society, while maintaining the traditions of her indigenous ancestors. The mythological background signifies the implementation of a culture’s mores and norms, explaining the shift from the India free of patriarchal restraint, to the repressed, colonized woman. A question arises: does the *mestiza* follow the dominant culture’s patriarchal order, or does she reach back to her ancestral roots, and evoke the power of *Coatlopeuh*, or does she need to exist in the in-between, to create a persona that is culturally-accepted, but also living to fulfill her own desires?

Moreover, when Anzaldúa moves into different sections throughout her collection of essays and poems, she changes between topics and subjects, to demonstrate her methods in encapsulating an entire essence of the *new mestiza/o*, before intersecting the entirety of her experiences into her poetry. In “How to Tame a Wild Tongue,” Anzaldúa characterizes the linguistic features found in the borderlands, further validating the essence of the *new mestiza/o*. Anzaldúa breaks down the languages that exist between the US-Mexican border, and the languages that cultivate from the borderlands, from the division between the U.S. and Mexico. She mentions eight different dialects: “Standard English,” “Working class and slang English,” “Standard Spanish,” “Standard Mexican Spanish,” “North Mexican Spanish dialect,” “Chicano Spanish (Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California have regional variations),” “Tex-Mex,” “*Pachuco* (called *caló*)” (77). Dialects carry perceptions and stereotypes by the oppressive forces who oversee the so-called “standard,” expressing the sociopolitical challenges that arise for people who do not perform into the “standard.” Interestingly, María Herrera-Sobek’s “Gloria Anzaldúa: Place, Race, Language, and Sexuality in the Magic Valley,” shows the linguistic transaction between the Aztec language, Nahuatl, Spanish, and English. Herrera-Sobek traces the borrowing and loaning of language, occurring first in Nahuatl, because of the geographical familiarity of the Aztec people, who already named the species of edibles and animals unique to the area; then, the words adopted into the Spanish of the Mexican-Americans inhabiting the land, and then into English for the Anglo-Americans occupying the borderlands. Herrera-Sobek’s examples follow:

[...] from the Nahuatl language, such as *tomatl* (*tomate*; tomato), *metlatl* (*metate*; grinding stone), *coyotl* (*coyote*; coyote), *cacahuatl* (*cacahuate*; peanut), *zacatl* (*zacate*; grass), *xocolatl* (*chocolate*; chocolate), *chilli* (*chile*; hot pepper), and numerous others,

particularly names of fruits and vegetables not native to Europe and the other continents (258).

Herrera-Sobek states, “Chicano Spanish” is a culmination of the languages it interacts with in the borderlands, including the indigenous languages of Mexico, and European languages brought over to the Americas, primarily Spanish and English. “Chicano Spanish” transforms the verbiage between English and Spanish, taking the root of an English word, and adding the Spanish morpheme, creating a “Spanish” (“Chicano Spanish”) verb (Herrera-Sobek, 258). The examples Anzaldúa offers follow the grammatical composition explained by Herrera-Sobek: “*cookiari* for *cook*, *watcher* for *watch*, *parkiar* for *park*, and *rapiar* for *rape*” (79). The transformation of English words to the verb function of the Spanish language, shows the culture’s accessibility to language and growth in the cultural *new mestiza/o* for the growing, complex lexicon of “Chicano Spanish.” Anzaldúa holds a header over her discourse of “linguistic *mestizaje*,” which she titles “Linguistic Terrorism,” expressing the dire need to validate “Chicano Spanish” for the people who live and grow in the borderlands (80). The borderlands are a culture of its own linguistic features, separate from the most basic understandings of both English and Spanish. The complexity of language is something to be respected, and not privileged by the majority of a linguistic geographic. Anzaldúa’s methodization demonstrates the usage, functionality, and purpose of the words she uses to represent “Chicano Spanish,” validating the complexity in the language, which is present in all languages with their own unique grammatical rules, morphologies, and lexicon.

In understanding the epistemology of Anzaldúa’s *new mestiza/o*, from seeing the cultural traditions, customs, norms, mores, and language that make up the *new mestiza/o*, Anzaldúa’s purpose for methodizing a cultural set of beliefs and values, demonstrates the empowerment of a

marginalized group—the Chicana, Mexicana, India, and mestiza. Anzaldúa wants to empower Mexican-American women, like herself, embracing the culmination of two contradicting cultures, to create a new culture, and to that effect, enact a spiritual change for the *new mestiza* now empowered. Going back to Martina Koegeler-Abdi's "Shifting Subjectivities: Mestizas, Nepantleras, and Gloria Anzaldúa's Legacy," readers and followers of Anzaldúa's work begin to see the positioning of subjectivity, even though the state of the "in-between" discussed in "La conciencia" contradicts the standpoint epistemology of the *new mestiza/o* that is discussed with a great deal of rigor and depth:

A mestiza actively turns multiplicity into a new subjectivity; mestiza consciousness is born out of the ambivalence of a consciously embraced hybrid inclusivity which turns the colonial and biological concept of mestizaje, the mixing of Spanish and Native people, into a self-chosen process of subjectivization (72).

From the creation of opposing cultures such as Western philosophy versus indigenous spirituality, Anglo-American customs versus Mexican customs, and even the English language versus the Spanish language, Anzaldúa seemingly works within the dichotomous relationships of the epistemology and ontology she is presenting. Except, the creation of an entirely new being, new consciousness, and new system of beliefs points to the challenges in looking at the *new mestiza/o* as a borrowing elements the indigenous and cancelling elements of the West, or vice-versa. The creation of the *new mestiza/o* disturbs the opposing cultures that represent a sense of balance when holding the subject as a discourse, and leave the reader with more questions in relation to the contradictions that Anzaldúa attempts to clarify.

To offer an example of how contradictions lead to new contradictions, I will look at Anzaldúa's poem "Interface," which is a representational text of the body interacting with an

intangible, immaterial spirit. In “Interface,” the speaker comes in contact with a spirit that cannot be sensed with the senses, but through a spiritual intuition: “where before there’d only been empty space / I sense layers and layers” (ll. 7-8). The interaction between the spirit and Anzaldúa’s speaker illustrates the desire to reach “nepantla,” the “in-between,” the interaction between the physical and spiritual world: “It was only there at the interface / that we could see each other” (ll. 27-28). In the first two stanzas of “Interface,” the speaker focuses on “nepantla,” the bridging of two spatial contradictions, but with no reference to her standpoint epistemology that she discusses at length in the first half of her hybrid text. I’m left asking several questions: what is the theorist’s magnitude on identity politics? Is it necessary to find empowerment in the physical world, or in Anzaldúa’s theorization, should the *mestiza* body preoccupy herself with finding spiritual connections? Is the cross between cultures experienced in the physical world less important than the cross between the physical and spiritual?

On another point, “Interface” creates an erotic positioning between the speaker and the “noumenal,” which Anzaldúa characterizes from Kantian philosophy, reinforcing the independence of the spiritual from the physical (ll. 34). The dichotomous relationship that Anzaldúa proposes to cross and bridge. Anzaldúa’s speaker describes the eroticism that occurs between the spirit that has been given a pronoun and flesh:

Her finger, I thought  
 But it went on and on  
     At the same time  
 an iciness touched my anus,  
     and she was in  
 and in and in  
     my mouth opening  
 I wasn’t just scared just astonished  
     rain drummed against my spine  
     turned to steam as it rushed through my veins  
 light flickered over me from toe to crown (ll. 88-98).



The reference to “alien” marks a connection back to Anzaldúa’s “La conciencia de la mestiza / Towards a New Consciousness,” alluding to her theorization of a “new consciousness,” born from Vasconcelo’s “*la raza cósmica*.” The “laugh” the “noumenon” Leyla makes signifies the lack of concern to being referred to as “Lez,” a derogatory term for lesbian women. The reference to the “alien consciousness” and the unconcerned nature of being spoken to in a derogatory way because of the speaker’s standpoint epistemology, may signify a success in reaching the “in-between.” Koegeler-Abdi claims Anzaldúa’s final stage in her ontological discourse was to reach “nepantla.” “In becoming a nepantlera, though, Anzaldúa is much more concerned with the precariousness and instability of any identity location after this initial process of de/construction” (81). Of course, I am not erasing the epistemology concerning the *new mestiza*, since Anzaldúa’s discourse is vigorously engendered in history, linguistics, gender, queerness, and other defining features of the “self.” What I am proposing, like Koegeler-Abdi, is that Anzaldúa’s focus in her epistemology of the *new mestiza* is slowly abandoned by the idealized ontology of “nepantla,” and the desire to find the “in-between,” between the physical and spiritual becomes only the more contradictory.

In accepting the contradictions and gaps in Gloria Anzaldúa’s theorization of the *new mestiza*, many Chicana/os, Mexicana/os, India/os, and mesitiza/os, accept much of the truths Anzaldúa presents. For instance, in Debra A. Castillo’s “Anzaldúa and Transnational American Studies,” Castillo mentions the influence Anzaldúa held over many women of color who were learning second-wave feminism (260). Castillo explains, many Chicanas, Mexicanas, Indias, and mesitizas carried Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, considering the hybrid text their “bible” (260). Moreover, in Linda Martín Alcoff’s “The Unassimilated Theorist,” Alcoff discusses the dangers in Anzaldúa’s later success. At first, Anzaldúa’s

*Borderlands / La Frontera : The New Mestiza* was not seen in academic campuses because of Anzaldúa's reputation for being anti-establishment. When the collection of essays and poems finally made it into academic and literary circles, scholars tokenized her work: "Her work was used to bolster some of the exclusionary and elitist theoretical fashions of the very same institution that made her marginal" (Alcoff, 256). The danger in tokenizing a marginalized writer is that they become the "authentic voice," representing demographics of people who do not fall under Anzaldúa's mythology, epistemology, or ontology. Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* was accepted with high praise by many people who shared an ancestral history, borderland experience, and cultural hybridity as Gloria Anzaldúa. The danger came from the lack of diversity among other writers like Anzaldúa, and naming her the only one disadvantaged her work from fair criticism, and disadvantaged audiences in escaping from their preconceived ideas on race, culture, and ethnicity.

Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands / La Frontera* demonstrates the cultural hybridity of the *new mestiza*, which she represents through her hybrid text of essays, poetry, footnotes, and code-switching between English and Spanish. Anzaldúa successfully methodizes the cultural hybridity existing in borderlands, validating and empowering many of the people who identify with Anzaldúa's *new mestiza/o*. The ontology in Anzaldúa's text encourages the dismantling of oppressive forces, so the need for marginalized communities and empowerment is no longer necessary, allowing for an ease in cultural transactions between all cultures. The contradictions that appear in *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* relate to the paradox of being *mestiza/o*. The final thoughts Anzaldúa leaves readers with is a conclusion full of questions: Anzaldúa's focus on reaching the "in-between" is obfuscated by the fact that the "in-between" exists in paradox and contradiction, so doesn't the rationalization of a subject open the

possibility for opposition, signaling another “open wound?” If we go back and pose that the “in-between” is a spatial, geographic location, like the borderlands, then we are accepting the opposition of cultures, so can there be an “in-between” with no opposition? It doesn’t seem likely, since we are met with a contradiction inside a contradiction. If Anzaldúa proposes the existence of a cultural or spiritual “in-between,” where individuals can cross from one culture to the next, or from the physical plane to the spiritual plane, then opposition still need to exist for the “in-between” to survive. If we look at the border as an “open wound,” then we need to start accepting that the *new mestiza* is a culture full of beauty and complexity, but only because of the contradicting violence that set the borderlands’ existence in motion.

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