

Gloria Anzaldúa

Borderlands

La Frontera



With an introduction by Sonia Saldivar-Hull

Second Edition

Aunt Lute Books SAN FRANCISCO

Copyright (c) 1987, 1999 by Gloria Anzaldúa
Copyright (c) 1999 by Karin Ikas

All rights reserved

Second Edition
10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2

Aunt Lute Books
P.O. Box 410687
San Francisco, CA 94141

"Holy Relics" first appeared in *Conditions Six*, 1980.

"Cervicide" first appeared in *Labyris, A Feminist Arts Journal*, Vol. 4,
No. 11, Winter 1983.

"En el nombre de todas las madres que han perdido sus hijos en la guerra"
first appeared in *IKON: Creativity and Change*, Second Series,
No. 4, 1985.

First Edition Cover and Text Design: Pamela Wilson Design Studio

Second Edition Cover Re-Design: Kajun Design

First Edition Cover Art: Pamela Wilson (*Ebécatl*, The Wind)

Second Edition Typesetting: Kathleen Wilkinson

Senior Editor: Joan Pinkvoss

Managing Editor: Shay Brawn

Production, Second Edition: Emma Bianchi, Corey Cohen, Gina Gemello,
Shahara Godfrey, Golda Sargento, Pimpila Thanaporn

Production, First Edition: Cindy Cleary, Martha Davis, Debra DeBondt,
Rosana Franciscato, Amelia Gonzalez, Lorraine Grassano, Ambrosia Marvin,
Papusa Molina, Sukey Wilder, Kathleen Wilkinson

Printed in the U.S.A.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Anzaldúa, Gloria.

Borderlands : the new mestiza = La frontera / Gloria Anzaldúa :
introduction by Sonia Saldivar-Hull. -- 2nd ed.

p. 264 cm.

English and Spanish.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 1-879960-57-5 (cloth). -- ISBN 1-879960-56-7 (paper)

1. Mexican-American Border Region--Poetry. 2. Mexican-American
women--Poetry. 3. Mexican-American Border Region--Civilization.

I. Title. II. Title: Frontera.

PS3551.N95B6 1999

811'.54--dc21

99-22546

CIP

Acknowledgments

To you who walked with me upon my path and who held
out a hand when I stumbled;

to you who brushed past me at crossroads never to touch
me again;

to you whom I never chanced to meet but who inhabit bor-
derlands similar to mine;

to you for whom the borderlands is unknown territory;

to Klt Quan, for feeding me and listening to me rant and
rave;

to Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz, for believing in me and being
there for me;

to Joan Pinkvoss, my editor and publisher, midwife extra-
ordinaire, whose understanding, caring, and balanced mixture
of gentle prodding and pressure not only helped me bring this
"baby" to term, but helped to create it; these images and words
are for you.

To the production staff at Spinsters/Aunt Lute who bore
the pressure of impossible deadlines well: Martha Davis whose
invaluable and excellent copy-editing has made the material
more readable and cohesive; Debra DeBondt who worked long
and hard to keep the book on schedule; Pam Wilson and Grace
Harwood;

to Frances Doughty, Juanita Ramos, Judith Waterman, Irena
Klepfisz, Randy Conner, Janet Aalps, Mirtha N. Quintanales,
Mandy Covey and Elana Dykewomon for their support and
encouragement, as well as feedback, on various pieces; to my
friends, students and colleagues in the ADP program in Vermont
College, Women's Voices Writing Workshop, UCSC, and writers
who participated in my writing workshops in NYC, New Haven,
San Francisco, Berkeley, Oakland, and Austin, Texas, in particu-
lar: Pearl Olson, Paula Ross, Marcy Alancraig, Maya Valverde,
Ariban, Tirsa Quiñones, Beth Brant, Chrystos, Elva Pérez-
Treviño, Victoria Rosales, Christian McEwen, Roz Calvert, Nina
Newington, and Linda Smuckler;

to Chela Sandoval, Rosa-María Villafane-Sosolak, Osa Hidalgo de la Riva, Lisa Carim, Sue Schwick, Viviana Varela, Cindy Cleary, Papusa Molina and Rusty Barcelo;

to Lisa Levin, Shelley Savren, Lisa Albrecht, Mary Pollock, Lea Arellano, Christine Weiland, Louise Rocha, Leon Fishman, Claude Talley;

to my family: my mother, Amalia; my sister, Hilda; my brothers, Urbano (Nune) and Oscar (Carito); my sisters-in-law, Janie and Sara; my niece, Missy, and my nephew, Urbie; Tío Pete y Tía Minga;

and especially to the memory of my father, Urbano, and my grandmothers, Eloisa (Locha) and Ramona;

gracias a toditos ustedes.

THIS BOOK
is dedicated *a todos mexicanos*
on both sides of the border.

G.E.A.

Contents

Introduction by Sonia Salvidar-Hull, *page 1*

Preface to the First Edition by Gloria Anzaldúa, *page 19*

ATRAVESANDO FRONTERAS / CROSSING BORDERS

1. The Homeland, Aztlán / *El otro México*, *page 23*
El destierro / The Lost Land
El cruzar del mojado / Illegal Crossing
2. *Movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan*, *page 37*
The Strength of My Rebellion
Cultural Tyranny
Half and Half
Fear of Going Home: Homophobia
Intimate Terrorism: Life in the Borderlands
The Wounding of the *india*-Mestiza
3. Entering Into the Serpent, *page 47*
Ella tiene su tono
Coatloapeuh, She Who Has Dominion Over Serpents
For Waging War Is My Cosmic Duty
Sueño con serpientes
The Presences
La facultad
4. *La herencia de Coatlicue* / The Coatlicue State, *page 63*
Enfrentamientos con el alma
El secreto terrible y la rajadura
Nopal de castilla
The Coatlicue State
The Coatlicue State Is a Prelude to Crossing
That Which Abides
5. How to Tame a Wild Tongue, *page 75*
Overcoming the Tradition of Silence
Oyé como ladra: el lenguaje de la frontera
Chicano Spanish

Linguistic Terrorism

"*Vistas, corridos, y comidas: My Native Tongue*
Si le preguntas a mi mamá, "¿qué eres?"

6. *Tlilli, Tlapalli* / The Path of the Red and Black Ink, page 87

Invoking Art

Ni cuicant: I, the Singer

The Shamanic State

Writing Is A Sensuous Act

Something To Do With the Dark

7. *La conciencia de la mestiza* / Towards a New
Consciousness, page 99

Una lucha de fronteras / A Struggle of Borders

A Tolerance For Ambiguity

La encrucijada / The Crossroads

El camino de la mestiza / The Mestiza Way

Que no se nos olviden los hombres

Somos una gente

By Your True Faces We Will Know You

El día de la Chicana

El retorno

Notes

UN AGITADO VIENTO / EHÉCATL, THE WIND

I. *Más antes en los ranchos*

White-wing Season, page 124

Cervicide, page 126

horse, page 128

Immaculate, Inviolable: *Como Ella*, page 130

Nopalitos, page 134

II. *La Pérdida*

sus plumas el viento, page 138

Cultures, page 142

sobre piedras con lagartijos, page 143

El sonavabitch, page 146

Mar de repollos, page 152

A Sea of Cabbages, page 154

We Call Them Greasers, page 156

Matriz sin tumba o "el baño de la basura ajena,"
page 158

III. *Crossers y otros atravesados*

Poets have strange eating habits, page 162

Yo no fui, fue Teté, page 164

The Cannibal's *Canción*, page 165

En mi corazón se incubaba, page 166

Corner of 50th St. and Fifth Av., page 167

Compañera, cuando amábamos, page 168

Interface, page 170

IV. *Cibuatlyotl*, Woman Alone

Holy Relics, page 176

En el nombre de todas las madres, page 182

Letting Go, page 186

I Had To Go Down, page 189

Cagado abismo, quitero saber, page 192

that dark shining thing, page 193

Cibuatlyotl, Woman Alone, page 195

V. *Animas*

La curandera, page 198

mujer cacto, page 202

Cuyamaca, page 204

My Black *Angelos*, page 206

Creature of Darkness, page 208

Antigua, mi diosa, page 210

VI. *El Retorno*

Arriba mi gente, page 214

To live in the Borderlands means you, page 216

Canción de la diosa de la noche, page 218

No se raje, chicanita, page 222

Don't Give In, *Chicanita*, page 224

Interview, page 227

Selected Bibliography, page 247

Sonia Saldivar-Hull was born in Brownsville, Texas and received her Ph.D. from University of Texas, Austin in 1990. She is an Associate Professor of English at UCLA, affiliated with Women's Studies and Chicana Studies. She is the author of "Women Hollering *Transfonteriza* Feminisms" (*Cultural Studies*, forthcoming) and *Feminism on the Border: Chicana Gender Politics and Literature* (UC Press, forthcoming).

Karin Ikas is currently finishing her Ph.D. at the University of Wuerzburg, Germany. In 1996 she received her M.A. at the University of Wuerzburg with a thesis on "Identity and Alterity in Modern Chicana Literature from a Cultural Studies Approach." Her publications include articles on Chicana Literature and an edited collection of Chicano short stories for high-school students. She is co-editor of a special issue of *ANGLISTIK*, "Chicano/Latino Literatures and Cultures: An International Perspective." The interview included here is from a collection of Karin Ikas's interviews with Chicana writers, *Chicana Ways: Close Encounters with Ten Chicana Writers*.

Gloria Anzaldúa is a Chicana *tejana*-lesbian-feminist poet and fiction writer from South Texas now living in Santa Cruz. She is editor of *Making Face/Making Soul: Haciendo Caras* (Aunt Lute, 1990) and co-editor of *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983), winner of the Before Columbus Foundation American Book Award. She is also the author of a bilingual children's picture book, *Prietita Has A Friend/Prietita tiene un amigo* (Childrens Book Press, 1991). Presently she is working on a collection of short fiction, *La Prieta*. Gloria has taught creative writing, Chicano Studies and Feminist Studies at University of Texas, San Francisco State University, Vermont College of Norwich University, and University of California at Santa Cruz.



Photo: Margaret Randall

Introduction to the Second Edition
by Sonia Saldívar-Hull

In the 12 years since the publication of Gloria Anzaldúa's foundational *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, women's studies and Chicana/Latina studies have flourished in intellectual production if not in academic acceptance. Even in the face of growing backlash, most dramatically embodied in anti-affirmative action laws in California, the Hopwood Decision in Texas, and similar legislation under consideration in many other states, *Borderlands* is now in its second edition. This historically significant text continues to be studied and included on class syllabi in courses on feminist theory, contemporary American women writers, autobiography, Chicana/o and Latina/o literature, cultural studies, and even major American authors.

After my initial reading of Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* in the summer of 1987, I, like many other Chicana academics, found myself compelled to engage its New Mestiza hermeneutics. Anzaldúa spoke to me as a fellow *Tejana*, as a *mujer* boldly naming herself feminist as well as Chicana. Juxtaposed against other foundational texts on the Border, such as *With His Pistol in His Hand* by Américo Paredes and *Occupied America* by Rodolfo Acuña, *Borderlands* offered a view of our América through the lens of a woman-identified woman.¹ The feminism that *Borderlands* advocates builds on the gendered articulations of women like Marta Cotera and Ana Nieto Gomez, whose early feminist speculations appear in the anthology *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*.² Chicanas were theorizing in the 1960s and 70s, and with Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga's interventions in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, a *transfronterista* (that is, a transnational feminist, a *transfrontera feminista*) consciousness built new coalitions with other U.S. Latinas and U.S. women of color.³ *Borderlands*, a socio-politically specific elaboration of late twentieth-century *feminista* Chicana epistemology, signals movement towards coalitions with other *mujeres* across the U.S.-Mexico geopolitical border.

Borderlands focuses on a specific geographic locale, the U.S.-Mexico border, and presents a specific history—that of Mexican origin U.S. Chicanas. But as a treatise that is “above all a feminist one” (106), it opens up a radical way of restructuring the way we study history. Using a new genre she calls *autobistoria*,⁴ Anzaldúa presents history as a serpentine cycle rather than a linear narrative.⁵ The *historia* she tells is a story in which indigenous icons, traditions, and rituals replace post-Cortesian, Catholic customs. Anzaldúa reconfigures Chicana affinities with the Catholic *Virgen de Guadalupe* and offers an alternative image: *Coatlicue*, the Aztec divine mother. In 1987, few U.S. *mexicana* scholars had invoked that name.

Borderlands' first essay/chapter, “The Homeland, Aztlán / *El otro México*,” introduces the reader to a topography of displacement. For the reader unfamiliar with Chicana/o history or the history of Northern Mexico's absorption by the United States in 1848, the text defines the border, politically and ideologically, as an “unnatural boundary” and hence posits a destabilizing potential in late twentieth-century Chicana cartography. She gives *mestizos* a genealogy that, as hybrid people, interpollates them as both native to the Americas and with a non-Western, multiple identity. The “lost land” she rediscovers or uncovers is always grounded in a specific material history of what was once northern Mexico. For the unschooled reader, she reviews the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, signed on Feb. 2, 1848, as the document that created a new U.S. minority: American citizens of Mexican descent. Anzaldúa's *testimonio*-like pedagogy offers knowledge that Anglo-centric schools tend to erase, interjecting a counter-narrative that tells of the appropriation of land by Anglo-Americans who did more than take territory: the process of absorption into the U.S. included the imposition of White Supremacy aided by the overt terrorist tactics of the Texas Rangers.⁶

The nation-building discourse in “Homeland, Aztlán” revisits the story that other Chicano/a foundational novels of the 1930s and 40s had previously fictionalized.⁷ Like *Caballero*, by Jovita González, a recently recovered historical novel, *Borderlands* offers a critique of the process of incorporation of Mexicans during the Mexican American war of 1836.⁸ Similarly, the multiple identities in *Borderlands* mirror Américo Paredes' *George*

Washington Gómez, a novel in which the protagonist's hybrid identity is at war with itself.⁹ While both of these historical fictions recover memory erased from the official story, Anzaldúa's *historia* offers a new way to write History. Like Paredes, Anzaldúa boldly aligns Chicana territorial history with the early twentieth century Mexico-Tejano resistance fighters, the Seditionists, who polemicized against the Anglo invaders in their political manifesto, the *Plan de San Diego*.¹⁰ But history in this New Mestiza narrative is not a univocal discursive exercise—in this new genre, a moving personal narrative about her Grandmother's dispossession occupies the same discursive space as a dry recitation of historical fact, while lyrics from a *corrido* about “the lost land” butt up against a poetic rendition of an ethnocentric anglo historian's vision of U.S. dominion over Mexico.

Indeed, the *Borderlands* genre continually refuses stasis. Shifting from Mexico-tejana History, to personal testimonial, the text moves restlessly onward to a history of a larger political family. As she concludes the opening essay, the New Mestiza narrator emphasizes class alliances with Mexican border-crossers who labor in unregulated border factories, the *maquiladoras*, and brings to light the dehumanization of those Mexican workers who cross over to the U.S. where the Border Patrol hunts them as vermin. The *mestizo* workers are then “caught between being treated as criminals and being able to eat” (34).

The New Mestiza chronicles much more than the history of a “third country” she calls the Border. The “closed country,” as she also names it, is peopled with gendered undocumented crossers. Not only does Anzaldúa disrupt anglo-centric nationalist histories, she interrupts the Chicano nationalist agenda as she engages feminist analysis and issues. Underpinned by feminist ideology, the women's stories relentlessly expand previous androcentric history texts.

Anzaldúa continues this process in the next section, “*Movtmientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan*” (“Rebellious Movements and Traitorous Cultures”), as she moves to confront the tradition of male dominance within her community. It opens with a long epigraph in un-translated Spanish, a passage which serves as a Chicana proclamation in face of the war—a proclamation of independence for the *mestizas* bound within a male-dominated culture. When Anzaldúa addresses the men and male-identified women in her community in Spanish, it

is as if she is addressing the elders who refused to speak English. She appeals to those authorities as she declares:

Those rebellious movements that we have in our Mexican blood surge like rivers overflowing in my veins. And like my people, who sometimes release themselves from the slavery of obedience, of silent acceptance, rebellion exists in me on the surface. Under my humble gaze an insolent face exists ready to explode. My rebellion was quite costly—cramped with insomnia and doubts, feeling useless, stupid, and impotent. I'm filled with rage when someone—be it my mother, the Church, the Anglo culture—tells me do this, do that without considering my desires. I argued. I talked back. I was quite the loudmouth. I was indifferent to many of my culture's values. I did not let the men push me around. I was not good or obedient. But I have grown. I no longer spend my life dumping cultural customs and values that have betrayed me. I have also gathered time proven customs and the customs that respect women. (37, my translation)

The passage ends in English, as if the language acquired as an adult is the language of feminist assertion: "But despite my growing tolerance, for this Chicana *la guerra de independencia* (the war for independence) is a constant" (37). This bilingual strategy implies that while the patriarchs of her youth may well be fluent English speakers, she will confront them directly in the language of her Chicana-mexicana-tejana traditions.

Dogmatic rules and assumptions prescribed Anzaldúa's life as a child and young woman in South Texas, but now she understands that "rules" are man-made and can be unmade with feminist logic. She offers specific examples of how she was restricted even from a life of the mind and recounts her rebellious resistance to incorporation by the family and community customs. Her *testimonio* relates the limitations placed on many subaltern women under the rule of fathers and male-identified mothers. The feminist rebel in her is the Shadow-Beast, "a part of me that refuses to take orders from outside authorities" (38). The Shadow Beast emerges as the part of women that frightens men and causes them to try to control and devalue female culture. Girls in the borderland are commonly taught to fear sexuality and learn that men value women's bodies only. Their individuality is devalued and selfishness is decried. (In the borderlands of Anzaldúa's youth,

"selfishness" includes anything women want to do to improve their lives.) The New Mestiza consciousness—while it refuses static notions of the self—profoundly validates Chicana selfhood.

"Cultural Tyranny" in Anzaldúa's South Texas is metonymy for patriarchy—the manner in which traditional culture works against women. Taking up the figure of Malintzín, Anzaldúa contests her place in Mexican mythology as the fallen Eve who "betrayed" her people by becoming Cortés' mistress and the mother of *mestizaje*. By reclaiming and reconceptualizing Malintzín, she claims for women the mythical homeland of Chicano cultural nationalists, Aztlán. This new historian subtly prods Chicano males to understand feminist rebellion as twin to the racialized class rebellion advocated by the cultural nationalists. Anzaldúa redefines cultural identity through gender and sexuality. And the now-transformed nationalism and gendered Aztlán are rescripted as feminist theory and New Mestiza consciousness.¹¹

Part of the work of that *mestiza* consciousness is to break down dualities that serve to imprison women. Her articulation of Chicana lesbian theory does just that, as she declares herself both male and female. Again, she uses *cuento* and *testimonio* to present theory as she recounts the young neighbor of her youth who was outsider and labeled "one of the others," half woman, half man. Refusing the condemnation of the labels, however, she strategically takes a feminist-nationalist turn to indigenous "tradition" that views alterity as power. The ultimate rebellion for Chicanas is through sexuality, and in Anzaldúa's version of queer theory, this is specifically true for lesbians of color.

Similarly, Anzaldúa's claim of the Indian part of her *mestizaje* avoids simplistic appropriation. The *indigena* in the New Mestiza is a new political stance as a fully racialized feminist Chicana. She appeals to a history of resistance by subaltern Indian women of the Americas and in that shared history narrates strong political affiliation: "My Chicana identity is grounded in the Indian woman's history of resistance" (43). This political alliance further strengthens her internal critique of Chicano cultural practices that deny the indigenous part of the *mestizaje*. Claiming all parts of her identity, even those that clash, she escapes essentialist categories and envisions one provisional home where she can "stand and claim my space, making a new culture—*una cultura mestiza*—with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture" (44).

Armed with her feminist tools, Anzaldúa's narrator is prepared to "enter the serpent," as she does in the following section, to explore the legacy of indigenous forbears. In keeping with this new feminism, the New Mestiza dramatically reclaims the female cultural figures that were marked traitors to the community. The first betrayal—denying the Indian in the Chicano—makes the second one easier to accept without question: the scripting of Malinali Tenepat (*Malintzín*) (44) and *la Llorona* (the woman who weeps for her lost or murdered children) into the whore of the *virgen*/whore dyad.¹²

By rewriting the stories of Malinali, *la Llorona* and the *Virgen de Guadalupe*, Anzaldúa is strategically reclaiming a ground for female historical presence. Her task here is to uncover the names and powers of the female deities whose identities have been submerged in Mexican memory of these three Mexican mothers. The New Mestiza narrates the pre-Cortesian history of these deities, and shows how they were devalued by both the Azteca-Mexica patriarchs and by the Christian conquerors. In presenting the origins of the Guadalupe myth, Anzaldúa offers new names for our studies—names that we must labor to pronounce: *Coatlicue*, *Cihuacoatl*, *Tonantzi*, *Coyolxauhqui*.

Significantly, Anzaldúa employs the language of the Spanish colonizers when she narrates the invention of Guadalupe by the Catholic Church. The well-known Juan Diego version of the Guadalupe story is told in poetic stanzas, a presentation that underlines the *historia*'s fictive character. The feminist revision, written in prose, authorizes itself as legitimate history. Anzaldúa's narrative then returns to Aztlán and Aztec history before the conquest with a critique that consciously ruptures the male Chicano romanticization of a vague utopian indigenous past. The reader enters a conversation between the New Mestiza scribe and those unreconstructed Chicano nationalists who, even today, refuse to accept the possibility that the Aztecs were but one nation of many and that they enslaved surrounding tribes.

La Llorona is another part of the *virgen*/whore dyad the New Mestiza reclaims, naming her the heir of *Cihuacoatl*, the deity who presided over women in childbirth. I do not believe it a simple mistake that this powerful female figure is then transformed into a woman who murders children rather than one who guides them into life. The centrality of *la Llorona* in Chicana oral and written traditions emerges in literature written by other

contemporary Chicana feminists. In *cuentos* like Helena Maria Viramontes' "The Cariboo Café," and "Tears on My Pillow," as well as in Sandra Cisneros' "Woman Hollering Creek," a Chicana feminist transformation of the powerless wailing woman resonates with Anzaldúa's revisionary project.¹³

Reclaiming and reinventing *Coatlicue*, Malintzín, and *la Llorona/Cihuacoatl* in New Mestiza narratives elaborates the constantly shifting identity formation of Anzaldúa's Chicana/mestiza feminist. In the next section, "*La herencia de Coatlicue / The Coatlicue State*," Anzaldúa turns to consider the implications of such a reclamation for the developing consciousness of her New Mestiza. In a powerful, dramatic incantatory poem, the search for the erased histories of female ancestors and the yearning for visibility follow the alien and alienated subject-in-process as she constructs provisional identities:

She has this fear that she has no names that she
has many names that she doesn't know her names She has
this fear that she's an image that comes and goes
clearing and darkening the fear that she's the dreamwork
inside somebody else's skull. (65)

Rather than a reductive, essential self, the New Mestiza constantly migrates between knowing herself: "She has many names," not knowing who or what she is: "the fear that she has no name;" and the fear of not owning who she is: a "fear that she's an image that comes and goes . . . the dreamwork inside somebody else's skull." She is all of the above, a woman without an official history and the woman who constructs her own historical legacy.¹⁴ The *Coatlicue State* precedes a spiritual and political crossing through which one arrives at a higher spiritual and political consciousness. The transformation involves facing her fear of change as she "tremble[s] before the animal, the alien, the sub- or suprahuman, the me that . . . possesses a demon determination and ruthlessness beyond the human" (72). Once she accomplishes the personal inner journey, the New Mestiza relies on the "ruthlessness" she has acquired when she emerges from the *Coatlicue State* and takes on the struggle for social change. When she names all her names, once again she enacts the culmination of unearthing her multiple subjectivities: the "divine within, *Coatlicue-Cihuacoatl-Tlazolteotl-Tonantzin-Coatlalopeuh-Guadalupe*—they are one" (72). As scholar Norma

Alarcón notes, the shifting identities, the multiple names are encapsulated in the New Mestiza's other name: Chicana.¹⁵

The recovery project that leads to the political, feminist social awareness Anzaldúa calls New Mestiza Consciousness emerges in her discussion of the language of the Borderers. Not until midway through the prose sections of *Borderlands*, in "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," does Anzaldúa begin to explain her use of multiple Chicana languages. The use of English/Spanish from the title page to the chapter headings and subheadings marks this new critical discourse. Throughout the text, in most of the chapter titles and subtitles, Spanish appears as casually as English. Readers who traverse these Borderlands are bound to face her strategy to reclaim the ground of multiple Mestiza languages. The multilingual text does not easily admit those who refuse full engagement with the linguistic demands of Border language.

New Mestiza Chicanas speak multiple Chicana tongues in order to enunciate their multiple names. Anzaldúa mixes Nahuatl, English and vernacular Spanish as a larger cultural critique of how the dominant group enforces domination through language. In "Wild Tongue" Anzaldúa focuses on how Chicanas are doubly punished for their illegitimate languages. Linguistic reclamation aside, her feminist point is that within the Chicana/o culture, language serves as a prison house for women, for whom not only assertiveness but the very act of speaking count as transgressions. She notes how males within the culture escape criticism for such transgressions.

She traces the origins of Chicano Spanish, a Border tongue, from sixteenth century usage: "Chicano Spanish is not incorrect; it is a living language" (77). Multiple Chicana languages allow for the multiple positionalities of *Coatlicue* and the subject she names New Mestiza. She claims eight languages, ending with *Caló*, *pachuco* Spanish, the "secret language" of the barrio, the vernacular. Chicana language is a *mestizaje* as well: it breaks down all dualisms. Deploying the language of warfare in the "Linguistic Terrorism" section, she stresses that there is no one Chicano language just as there is no one Chicano experience. The discussion culminates with a feminist note: "I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white. I will have my serpent's tongue—my woman's voice, my sexual voice, my poet's voice. I will overcome the tradition of silence" (81).

The following chapter, "*Tlilli, Tlapalli* / The Path of the Red and Black Ink," enacts the multilingual methodology of *mestiza* language. As Walter Mignolo tells us, Anzaldúa quotes a dialogue (in *Borderlands* 93) in Spanish from the *Colloquios y doctrina christiana*. The dialogue, which was initially recorded in Nahuatl and then translated into Spanish by Bernardino de Sahagún in 1565, "narrates," according to Mignolo, "the moment in which the Spanish noblemen refer to the Tlamatinime (the wise men, those who can read the black and the red ink written in the codices)." He continues:

Anzaldúa's languaging entangles Spanish, English and Nahuatl (the first two with a strong 'literary' tradition kept alive after the conquest; the third, which was and still is an oral way of languaging, was disrupted during and marginalized after the conquest), and her languaging invokes two kinds of writing: the alphabetic writing of the metropolitan center and the pictographic writing of pre-Columbian Mexican (as well as Mesoamerican) civilizations.¹⁶

Anzaldúa thus stages her writing within the larger context of the continent and its layered histories. When Anzaldúa deploys multiple languages as part of her New Mestiza methodology, she enunciates her writing as an act of self-creation within that context, a strategy she claims as a Nahuatl concept.

In the final prose section, "*La conciencia de la mestiza*," Anzaldúa brings together the work of the previous essays and offers a working definition of a New Mestiza Consciousness. Above all it is a feminist consciousness, one that goes beyond filiation—the ties of "blood." She moves beyond psychological examinations, leaping from "insecurity and indecisiveness," (100) traveling with "mental nepantlism," accepting her interstitial material existence, to a life committed to social action. She risks exposing the "work the soul performs" (101) as she attains a "differential consciousness," to use Chela Sandoval's notion of this other consciousness.¹⁷ Throughout the text, she labors to construct a new, activist subject who can re-inscribe Chicana History into the record, re-legitimize Chicano multiple linguistic capacities, and trace the ethnic/racial origins of Mestiza *mexicano-tejanas*. Paradoxically, it is only in that context that she can claim that "as a *mestiza* I have no country . . . as a lesbian I have no race," and that as a feminist she is "cultureless" (102).

"*El camino de la mestiza* / The Mestiza Way," synthesizes the previous speculations and offers the requisite actions for the new subject, the New Mestiza, as she embarks on her life of action: "Her first step is to take inventory." She "puts history through a sieve"; she communicates "the rupture . . . with oppressive traditions" and "documents the struggle." Only after undertaking that process can she "reinterpret history and, using new symbols, . . . shape new myths" (104). The text of the entire book is encapsulated here. She calls for a "new man" and reiterates: "the struggle of the *mestiza* is above all a feminist one" (106).

The second half of *Borderlands* reenacts dramatically the process of coming into (*mestiza*) consciousness and the practice of the *mestiza* way. The section, "*Más antes en los ranchos*" [Long ago in the ranches], invokes the oral tradition and prepares the reader to enter the poetic dramatizations. In "White-wing Season," the South Texas hardscrabble lives of Mexico *tejanas* serve as backdrop for the *cuentito* (vignette) of a farm woman who accepts money from "whitemen" (124), allowing them to shoot white wing doves on her land. Slaughtered white wing doves, which are sport for the hunters returning to the Midwest, are juxtaposed against the Mexican woman's need to accept the kill to feed her family. In "horse," which Anzaldúa dedicates to the *pueblo* of her childhood in Hargill, Texas, the Chicano community rejects the gringo money offered as compensation when the sons of the white community wantonly torture a horse. What may appear as passive acceptance by the *mexicano* is actually a wisdom exhibited by these men who know that justice is beyond their reach in the borderlands of Texas: "the *mexicanos* mumble if you're Mexican/ you are born old" (129).

"*La Pérdida*" [The Loss], continues the practice of New Mestiza consciousness by chronicling workers' *historias*. "*Sus plumas el viento*" [Give Wind to Her Feathers] (138) records the everyday labor of subaltern women. A disturbing rape narrative like "We Call Them Greasers," "*Sus plumas el viento*" tells the story of Pepita, a woman who is raped by her boss in the field, against whom she has no recourse. The narrative is a reverie, a memory of a childhood spent in the farm fields witnessing Chicanas like Pepita submitting to the white field boss's sexual violence in order to keep their jobs. Further adding to her

humiliation, Pepita also endures the Chicanos' contempt as they spit on the ground when she emerges from her ordeal. Now bearing the mark of Malinche, the traitor to her race, Pepita projects herself onto the figure of the *chuparrosa*, the hummingbird. No longer the creature she remembers from the safe haven of her grandmother's garden, the hummingbird now appears to her, in the context of the fields, as an object of violence: "the obsidian wind/ cut tassels of blood/ from the hummingbird's throat" (139). The scribe longs to escape her class-mandated fate as manual laborer. She reads books; she searches for another possibility. The *pluma*, the hummingbird's feather, becomes the quill that helps liberate the New Mestiza from *las labores* [the fields]. She imagines the possibility of escape, "If the wind would give her feathers for fingers/ she would string words and images together." But even nature conspires against her dreams: "*el viento sur le tiró su saliva/ pa' tras en la cara*," [the southern wind blew her spit back in her face] (140).

The section, "*Crossers y otros atravesados*" [and other misfits] focuses on the poetic sensibility, on lesbian sexuality, and on homophobic violence. "*Yo no fui, fue Teté*" (164), employs cholo-speak, the barrio vernacular, as a gay man recounts a beating by his homophobic "brothers." He recognizes fear and hatred in those crazed faces that stab him and curse him with sexual epithets. His pain intensifies because "*mi misma raza*" [his own people] make him an orphan, reiterating Anzaldúa's assertion that like Chicana lesbians, this gay man is without a race (102). In contrast, "*Compañera, cuando amábamos*" [When We Loved] lyrically celebrates those muted afternoons when two women loved and made love: "When unscathed flesh sought flesh and teeth, lips/ In the labyrinths of your mouths" (168, my translation).

"*Cibuatlyotl, Woman Alone*" celebrates the goddess, antecedent of *la Llorona*, Serpent Skirt, the sexual goddess of childbirth. The New Mestiza mythmaker links Saint Theresa in "Holy Relics," to other wailing women in "*En el nombre de todas las madres que han perdido sus hijos en la guerra*" [In the name of all the mothers who have lost their children in war]. *Mestiza* feminists take on the guise of the goddess in "*Cibuatlyotl, Woman Alone*" (195) as they are banished from traditional Chicano communities. The betrayal here is not by a female or by the multilingual Malintzin—the traitor is the community. The poem reenacts the New Mestiza's struggle to retain

the "homeland" and yet negotiate multiple subject positions as well. The "Animas" section begins with "*La curandera*" (198), a dramatic allegory in which the traditional folk healer enters into the serpent and emerges with the knowledge, the healing yerbitas (herbs), which contribute physically, psychologically and intellectually to strong communities.

The final section, like the last section of the prose, is *El Retorno* [The Return]. "To live in the Borderlands Means You" (216) calls *mestizas* to action as they become aware of multiple positionalities, contradictions, and ambiguities. The *mestiza* with her hard-earned consciousness cannot remain within the self, however. The awareness of borderland existence spurs her to "fight hard" to resist stasis, "the gold elixir beckoning from the bottle," as well as to continue her resistance strategies in the other war where the "gun barrel" and "the rope crushing the hollow of your throat" still exist. Survival may signify that "you must live *sin fronteras* (without borders)" and "be a crossroads" but to do so requires activism and not simply being born a racialized, gendered *mestiza* in the borderlands.

While *estudios de la frontera* (border studies) certainly were not invented by Gloria Anzaldúa in *Borderlands*, this book signaled a new visibility for academic programs on the study of the U.S.-Mexico border area. Discursive production on the border flourished with new anthologies and other academic publications bringing to light a remapped academic topography with the border as the organizing trope. In 1991, Héctor Calderón and José Saldívar published the groundbreaking anthology, *Criticism in the Borderlands: Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture and Ideology*. Emily Hicks published *Border Writing: The Multidimensional Text* in 1991. And Ruth Bejar crossed generic and disciplinary borders in her study, *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story* in 1993. Alfred Arteaga's anthology, *An Other Tongue: Nation and Ethnicity in the Linguistic Borderlands* was published in 1994 and Carl Gutiérrez-Jones analyzed legal discourse in Chicano cultural production in *Rethinking the Borderlands* in 1995. Guillermo Gómez Peña published his genre-mixing *The New World Border* in 1996 and José Saldívar remapped American cultural studies in *Border Matters*, 1997.

This *transfrontera*, transdisciplinary text also crossed rigid

boundaries in academia as it traveled between Literature (English and Spanish), History, American Studies, Anthropology and Political Science departments, and further illuminated multiple theories of feminism in women's studies and Chicana studies. It was—and remains—a defining statement on the inextricability of sexuality, gender, race and class for Chicanas and changed the way we talk about difference in sexuality, race/ethnicity, gender, and class in the U.S. Read within its historical context, *Borderlands* resists containment as a transcendent excursion into "otherness." With this second edition, *Borderlands / La Frontera* continues to offer a radical (re)construction of space in the Americas where political struggles and alliances are forged only after risking conflicts, appropriations, and contradictions in the face of power and domination.

February 1999

Notes

1. Américo Paredes, *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero*. Austin: University of Texas Press. Reprint, 1971. Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*. Second Edition, 1981, Third Edition, 1988. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.

2. See for example, Marta Cotera, "Among the Feminists: Racist Classist Issues—1976" 213-20; and Anna Nieto Gomez, "La Femenista" 86-92 in *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*, ed. Alma M. García. New York: Routledge, 1997.

3. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. 2nd Edition. New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1981. In the Foreword to the second edition, Moraga maps U.S. feminists' of color political location within a global context. For a full discussion of this transnational impulse, see my *Feminism on the Border: Chicana Gender Politics and Literature*.

4. In the essay, "Border Arte: *Nepantla*, *El Lugar de la Frontera*," Anzaldúa identifies border visual art as one that "supercedes the pictorial. It depicts both the soul of the artist and the soul of the *pueblo*. It deals with who tells the stories and what stories and histories are told. I call this form of visual narrative *autobistorias*. This form goes beyond the traditional self-portrait or autobiography; in telling the writer/artists' personal story, it also includes the artist's cultural history" (113). She continues that when she

creates art, such as an altar, she represents much more than herself, "they are representations of Chicana culture" (113). While her definition here targets visual artistry, I believe that it could well describe the Borderlands genre as well. In *La Frontera / The Border: Art About the Mexico / United States Border Experience*, ed. Natasha Bonilla Martínez. San Diego: Centro Cultural de la Raza, Museum of Contemporary Art, 1993.

5. See Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, "Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands / La Frontera*: Cultural Studies, 'Difference,' and the Non-Unitary Subject." *Cultural Critique*, Fall 1994, 5-28. My reading was greatly influenced by her comprehensive study and by our numerous discussions about Chicana feminism(s), *mestizaje*, and Borderlands.

6. Angie Chabram-Dernerseian's "On the Social Construction of Whiteness within Selected Chicana/o Discourses" offers a brilliant discussion of the construction of Aztlán by Chicano cultural nationalists and presents a reading of Borderlands. In *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, ed. Ruth Frankenberg. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997, 107-64.

7. My interpretation of these early Chicana/o novels builds on Doris Sommer's observations about Latin American historical fiction, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

8. *Caballero: A Historical Novel*, Jovita González and Eve Raleigh. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1996. This novel was originally written in the late 1930s but not "recovered" until recently. (There is some question about the extent to which Eve Raleigh participated in the actual writing of the text.)

9. Américo Paredes, *George Washington Gómez*. Houston: Arte Público Press, 1990. This is yet another novel of the 1930s that was not published until this decade.

10. For a discussion of the Seditionists and their manifesto, see Américo Paredes, *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976, 33. See also Ramón Saldivar's discussion of the Seditionists and El Plan de San Diego in *Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, 28-31. For the text of the Plan de San Diego see *Literatura Chicana: Texto y Contexto*, ed. Antonia Castañeda Shuler, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, and David Sommer. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982, 81-83.

11. Inderpal Grewal in "Autobiographic Subjects, Diasporic Locations," makes a similar point: "Anzaldúa's exploration of the 'borderland'

consciousness powerfully asserts itself as feminist . . . [it] reveal[s] different modes of multiple positioning and practices around issues of feminism and feminism" 235-6. In *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*, ed. Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994, 231-54.

12. For a comprehensive analyses of Malintzín Tenépal see Norma Alarcón's two essays: "Chicana's Feminist Literature: A Revision Through Malintzín/ Or: Malintzín: Putting Flesh Back on the Object," in *This Bridge Called My Back*, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1981, 182-90; and "Traditadora, Traditora: A Paradigmatic Figure of Chicana Feminism," in *Cultural Critique*, Fall 1989, 57-87. For one of the first Chicana feminist examinations of Malintzín, see Adelaida del Castillo, "Malintzín Tenépal: A Preliminary Look Into a New Perspective" in *Essays on La Mujer*, ed. Rosaura Sánchez and Rosa Martínez Cruz. Los Angeles: Chicano Studies Research Center Publications, University of California, Los Angeles, 1977.

13. "The Cariboo Cafe," in *The Moths and Other Stories*, Helena María Viramontes. Houston: Arte Público Press, 1985, 61-75. "Tears on My Pillow," Helena María Viramontes in *New Chicano/a Writing*. Ed. Charles Tatum. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, pp. 110-15. "Woman Hollering Creek," in *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* by Sandra Cisneros. New York: Vintage Books, 1991, 43-56. For readings of *la Llorona* in the above stories see my *Feminism on the Border: Chicana Gender Politics and Literature*.

14. My reading of this passage is informed by Norma Alarcón's brilliant discussion, "Chicana Feminism: In the Tracks of 'The' Native Woman" in *Cultural Studies*, 1:3 (October 1990), 248-56.

15. In "Chicana Feminism," Alarcón explains: "the name 'Chicana,' in the present, is the name of resistance that enables cultural and political points of departure and thinking through the multiple migrations and dislocations of women of 'Mexican' descent. The name Chicana, is not a name that women (or men) are born to or with, as is often the case with 'Mexican,' but rather it is consciously and critically assumed . . ." (250). In the short story in the *Woman Hollering Creek* collection, "Little Miracles, Kept Promises," Sandra Cisneros also evokes those multiple Chicana/Mestiza identities.

16. Walter Mignolo, "Linguistic Maps, Literary Geographies, and Cultural Landscapes: Languages, Linguaging, and (Trans)nationalism," 190-91. In *Modern Language Quarterly*, 57:2, June 1996, 182-96.

17. Chela Sandoval, "U.S. Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World." *Genders* 10 (Spring 1991): 1-24.