

HOW TO TELL A MESTIZO FROM AN ENCHIRITO® COLONIALISM AND NATIONAL CULTURE IN THE BORDERLANDS

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I began to think, “Yes, I’m a chicana but that’s not all I am. Yes, I’m a woman but that’s not all I am. Yes, I’m a dyke but that doesn’t define all of me. Yes, I come from working class origins, but I’m no longer working class. Yes, I come from a mestizaje, but which parts of that mestizaje get privileged? Only the Spanish, not the Indian or black.” I started to think in terms of mestiza consciousness. What happens to people like me who are in between all of these different categories? What does that do to one’s concept of nationalism, of race, ethnicity, and even gender? I was trying to articulate and create a theory of a Borderlands existence. . . . I had to, for myself, figure out some other term that would describe a more porous nationalism, opened up to other categories of identity.

—Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Interviews*

One of the most crucial questions facing leftist activists and intellectuals today is the question of nationalism and its relation to liberation struggles.¹ A century ago, the period

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I realize that many readers may not be familiar with an Enchirito.® The late José Antonio Burciaga provided this useful account:

The Taco Bell menu can be a mystery if one is not familiar with the renamed food items. They can even puzzle a bicultural person. What’s an Enchirito? “A combination burrito and enchilada,” the manager answered. . . . I had envisioned a half-burrito, half-enchilada transplant and felt the heartburn coming on. [23]

1. On nationalism, see, among others, Anderson; Cabral; Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought; Dávila; Fanon; Guha; Hobsbawm; James 33–64; Yoshino.

of nation-state consolidation in Europe seemed to come to an end with the unification of Germany and Italy. European leftists of the era tended to address “the national question” primarily with regard to those European nations that were shut out or suppressed by nation-state formation. Debates about national culture resurfaced in a revolutionary context when independence movements swept Africa and Asia during and after World War II, and a substantial body of literature attempting to integrate anticolonial struggle, national liberation, and socialism arose from the capitalist “periphery.” Much of this literature, and the wars for independence out of which it grew, adapted the language of nationalism to its own purposes. These movements gave new hope that national liberation struggles would prove compatible with greater human freedom and equality. Despite that hope, the destructive effects of nationalism are today visible everywhere: for example, the devastating wars in the Balkans, the repression of indigenous peoples by national bourgeoisie throughout the Americas, religious-national strife between Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka, the vertiginous intensification of national chauvinism in the United States, Western Europe, and Australia. Simultaneously, and in the context of feminist criticisms of nationalism [see, for example, Chatterjee, *Nation*; Lutz et al.; Mosse], attempts to unite the struggle to liberate “the nation” from colonial or neocolonial domination with progressive struggles against capitalist exploitation and against sexual- and gender-based domination continue [see, for example, Trask]. In Latin America, anticapitalist struggles lauded by Western socialists regularly take the form of national liberation struggles, such as the EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional [Zapatist National Liberation Army]) in Mexico and the FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional [Sandinist National Liberation Front]) in Nicaragua. Additionally, lesbian and gay activists and theorists in the United States have frequently sought to appropriate nationalist rhetoric even as black and Chicano nationalist movements have been on the decline [see, for example, Berlant and Freeman; Moraga 145–74].

Debates about anticolonial struggle and “Third World” nationalism may seem at first to be an odd context into which to introduce the work of Gloria Anzaldúa. Critical writing on Anzaldúa’s work has tended not to consider its relevance to debates on the relations among capitalism, colonialism, and national culture.² Instead, her major work, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, is usually discussed (or, more often than not, simply cited) as a contribution to feminist and antiracist discussions about the construction of the self within multiple contexts of domination and about that self’s resistance to oppression and struggle for recognition.³ While acknowledging the importance of Anzaldúa’s contributions to these discussions, this essay examines *Borderlands* as offering a forward-looking alternative to nationalism, specifically, to Chicano cultural nationalist positions articulated during the 1960s and 1970s, at the height of the Chicano Movement.⁴ I argue that central to this project is a critical, non-Eurocentric reconceptualization of the Marxist project of human emancipation. In exploring Anzaldúa’s alternative, I analyze the mythic symbolism and appropriation of cultural nationalist tropes in her theoretical elaboration

2. *Exceptions include Grewal and Mignolo.*

3. *There is considerable overlap between my reading of Anzaldúa as critically revising nationalism and readings of Anzaldúa as contributing to debates on identity and identity politics [for example, Adams; Barnard; Fowlkes; Raisin]. The degree to which nationalism and identity politics can be conflated, however, is debatable (the most notable difference is, of course, nationalism’s connection to land). While it is tempting to conflate the two in a Chicano context, where a nationalist ideology was employed in the service of an identity-based social movement, for the purposes of this essay, I want to retain a distinction between them. For an interesting study of the relationship between identity and nationalism in Puerto Rico, see Dávila.*

4. *Furthermore, I do not intend to suggest that reading *Borderlands* as concerned with colonialism and national culture should supplant other contexts and emphases.*

of “mestiza⁵ consciousness” and look at some objections that have been raised to her theories. This project contends that valuable contributions would be lost if we were to relegate the work of feminist, queer, and/or Chicana and Chicano thinkers to questions strictly and directly related to their identities. In other words, I believe that writers like Anzaldúa have something to say in addition to what it is like to be a Chicana lesbian.

Chicano Cultural Nationalism: A Critical Overview

Before advancing to Anzaldúa’s critique of nationalism, however, I would like to offer a survey of the Chicano cultural nationalist context to which Anzaldúa addresses herself most immediately. In organizing people of Mexican descent in the United States against the historical forces of ethnic/racial discrimination and capitalist exploitation that oppressed them, Chicano cultural nationalism created a politically oppositional identity (“Chicano”) and developed a national myth around which to consolidate the resulting “imagined community.” The ancient Aztec myth of the journey out of Aztlán gained contemporary relevance in combination with the legacy of the Anglo invasion and colonial appropriation of what is now the US Southwest. This myth gave Chicanas and Chicanos a double claim to the land (as displaced Aztecs and as colonized Mexicans). While national independence was rarely an immediate goal, direct community control of the barrios and villages was.⁶

Chicano cultural nationalism thus had three components: indigenismo, a privileging of unity over internal difference, and a conservative ideology of the family. First, it required a foundational identification on the part of Chicanas and Chicanos with their Indian ancestry (indigenismo). This identification was crucial, because it was on their centuries-old occupation of the land that Chicanas and Chicanos based their primary claim to Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah, and Colorado. Chicano cultural nationalism thus sought to emphasize indigenous and Mexican cultural traits over cultural influences from Spain, the Anglo United States, or elsewhere. This emphasis drew further justification from the dominant culture’s devaluation of indigenous and Mexican cultures. At times, however, cultural nationalists lost sight of the constructed nature of what “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán” called Chicanos’ “proud historical heritage” and of the actual importance of Anglo, Spanish, African, and other European influences on Chicano culture [“Plan” 1].⁷

It might be helpful at this point to compare briefly Chicano cultural nationalism with Mexican nationalism. During the revolutionary period (1910–17), Mexican nationalism invoked a similar indigenismo [Brading 73–82; Turner 170–79]. This philosophy sought to link a cultural glorification of Mexico’s Aztec legacy and contemporary Indian presence with a nationalist revolutionary project. While at least some of the original proponents of indigenismo were sincere in their attempts not only to glorify Indians but also to better their economic standing within the nation, Mexican

5. *I have chosen not to provide emphasis to non-English words, so as to resist the implication that English constitutes a sutured entity, from which “foreign” terms can and must be distinguished. In quotations from other sources, I have followed the authors’ own practices of emphasizing or not emphasizing words and phrases.*

6. *For more on the role of Aztlán and cultural nationalism in the Chicano Movement, see Anaya and Lomelí; Cooper Alarcón; Moraga [145–74].*

7. *Discussion of Spanish culture in relation to Chicano culture usually (with good reason) associates emphasis on a Spanish cultural heritage with a conservative impulse to “whiten” Mexican Americans. While this has frequently been the case [Gutiérrez 243–46], an acknowledgment of (white) Spanish influence need not de-emphasize indigenous or African cultural traits.*

nationalism has not been revolutionary for many years. In the past few decades, indigenismo (as well as “mestizofilia”⁸) has tended to pander to a commercialized Mexican national identity. In its drive toward homogenization, this tendency masks the conditions of poverty in which many indigenous peoples throughout Mexico live, promoting instead the myth that all mexicanos are mestizos or that those who are not need to assimilate to the dominant mestizo culture. Whether the assertion is that mestizaje (racial mixing) defines the Mexican national character or that Mexico is fundamentally an Indian nation, contemporary indigenismo and mestizofilia in Mexico tend to occlude rather than to resist racial and economic inequality. In contrast, the indigenismo of Chicano cultural nationalism, like some Mexican indigenismo during the revolutionary period, explicitly seeks to draw attention to and to challenge inequality and oppression.

A second component of Chicano cultural nationalism is its elision of differences among Chicanas and Chicanos. While stressing their difference from Anglo-American culture, cultural nationalists frequently de-emphasized the importance of differences internal to Chicano communities. One of the most important documents of Chicano cultural nationalism, “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán,” for example, describes nationalism “as the key to organization” which “transcends all religious, political, class, and economic factions or boundaries” [2]. One problem with such nationalist formulations is that precisely because nationalism attempts to “transcend” political, class, economic, and other factors, it obscures many relations of domination between, for example, middle-class Chicanas and Chicanos and Chicana and Chicano workers and peasants, or between women and men within Chicano communities. To be sure, the spirit of Chicano nationalism was rarely, if ever, bourgeois [Muñoz 76], and it was often directly influenced by the radical Black militancy of the 1960s and 1970s (most obviously in the modeling of the Brown Berets on the Black Panther Party). As J. Jorge Klor de Alva notes, “nationalism . . . was a point of departure, unity with others fighting US oppression and racism was a secondary, but important goal. [El Plan] did not obscure socioeconomic issues, although it did underestimate the importance of class divisions” [151]. However, since it also de-emphasized differences and inequalities of gender, sexuality, color, religion, language, and upbringing among Chicanas and Chicanos, cultural nationalism was unable to account for how such factors influenced Chicanas’ and Chicanos’ relationship to nationalism and nationalist rhetoric.

This aspect of cultural nationalist ideology is very closely tied to a third component of Chicano cultural nationalism: its dependence on a conservative ideology of the family and gender roles. Chicano cultural nationalism sought a fortification of the Chicano family, seen to be under attack by Anglo capitalism and racism. Criticisms of gender inequality within the family and Chicano communities were thus viewed with a high degree of suspicion, if not attacked outright as diversionary or complicit with external attacks on Chicanos [Segura and Pesquera 72–75]. Critiques addressing the importance of oppressions based on sexual preference were viewed even more harshly [González 48–50]. During the late 1970s and the 1980s, Chicana feminists initiated strong challenges to Chicano cultural nationalism from within [see García, esp. 48–49, 80–86, 117, 265–70]. Gloria Anzaldúa emerged as one of the most influential of these Chicana feminist critics. As I will demonstrate in the remainder of this essay, however, her critiques go beyond “just” a Chicana feminist critique of Chicano cultural nationalism.

8. “Mestizofilia” has been defined as “the idea that the phenomenon of mestizaje—that is, the mixing of races and/or cultures—is desirable” and that mestizos are “the authentic depository of Mexican identity.” It is often coupled with the assertion that “Mexico cannot become a prosperous and developed nation until the process of mestizaje is completed” [Basave Benítez 13; trans. mine]. The most famous proponent of a version of mestizofilia is José Vasconcelos, whose *La raza cósmica* is one of Anzaldúa’s sources.

Early in the first chapter of her 1987 text *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa launches a feminist critique of Chicano cultural nationalism's founding myth: the heroic return to Aztlán. She argues that this myth represents an uncritical return to an Aztec past that established its dominance in part through the oppression of women. She begins with her interpretation of the Aztecs' arrival at Tenochtitlán (where they would found their empire) after their departure from Aztlán. Anzaldúa analyzes the mythic imagery of an eagle devouring a serpent on the site of the future city. She interprets it as an indication that a patriarchal order (symbolized by the eagle) had already established itself through the symbolic (and actual) domination of women (symbolized by the serpent) [5]. Anzaldúa then recounts the oppression women suffer within present-day Mexican and Chicano cultures, including not only the material oppression suffered at the hands of Anglos, but also that inflicted by other Mexicans and Chicanas and Chicanos [12]. She then expands this critique to include the persecution of lesbians and gay men within Chicano, Mexican, and some indigenous cultures. Metaphorically describing the oppression of queers within Chicano communities, she writes that the experience of homophobia is a "[f]ear of going home. And of not being taken in . . . of being abandoned by the mother, the culture, *la Raza*, for being unacceptable, faulty, damaged" [20]. Although this critique differs from classical Marxist critiques of nationalism, which stress the divergence of interests among the proletariat and bourgeoisie of oppressed nations, the two bear some similarities in the way they highlight internal divisions and domination within the nation.

To explain these intracultural and intranational relations of domination, Anzaldúa introduces the idea of the "Shadow-Beast"—that part of ourselves that we disavow and project onto others. According to Anzaldúa, oppressive customs often result from attempts to protect the community from its Shadow-Beast. On the level of personal identity, there is a specific referent for the Shadow-Beast within the psyche of the Mexicana and the Chicana: "We, *indias y mestizas*, police the Indian in us, brutalize and condemn her. . . . *Son las costumbres que traicionan. La india en mí es la sombra: La Chingada, Tlazolteotl, Coatlicue* [It is the customs that betray. The Indian woman in me is the shadow: The Fucked One (Malinche), Tlazolteotl, Coatlicue]" [22].⁹ Similarly, on the cultural level, violence is acted out against a Shadow-Beast who is at once concrete and symbolic [22–23]. Through silence and servitude, women, in particular indigenous women, have served as the embodiment for a whole collection of fears and anxieties which make up the Shadow-Beasts of Anglo, Chicano, Indian, Mexican, and Spanish cultures. The cycle of intranational and intrapsychic violence can result in "choques," defined by Anzaldúa as "[t]he coming together of two self-consistent but *habitually* incompatible frames of reference," for example, Mexican and Anglo cultures, or feminism and nationalism [78, emphasis mine]. Because habits and customs view these frames of reference as incompatible, choques cannot be resolved unless the Shadow-Beast is acknowledged as a part of the self or the community, owned, and taken in. Violence against the Shadow-Beast leads Anzaldúa to reject a traditional Chicano cultural nationalism. For her, a national mythology or culture unable to come to terms with the Shadow-Beast or to resolve its choques remains unable to emancipate the people it claims to represent. She writes, "I do not buy all the myths of the tribe into which I was born. . . . I will not glorify those aspects of my culture which have injured me and which have injured me in the name of protecting me" [21–22].

This invented myth of the Shadow-Beast provides Anzaldúa with an extremely useful way of describing the process of abjection that so often accompanies nationalist

9. *Coatlicue is a pre-Aztec goddess, "Lady of the Serpent Skirt, [who] contained and balanced the dualities of male and female, light and dark, life and death"* [Borderlands 32].

projects. One particular advantage of her analysis is the focus on the victims of violence directed at the Shadow-Beast. Rather than viewing Chicanas and other women as subalterns who are beyond representation within the discourse of the nation, Anzaldúa focuses on the effects of this violence on them as subjects. It also enables her to emphasize the process of psychological healing and recovery necessary for those people who have been fragmented and cast out. It is among the most oppressed members of society (the multiply oppressed) that choques are most obvious. This experience of choques and the tremendous effort necessary to cope with them are among the factors leading to the epistemology that Anzaldúa names “mestiza consciousness.”

As an alternative to forms of nationalism dependent on the abjection of the Shadow-Beast, Anzaldúa calls for a cultural mythology that arises out of the contemporary cultural realities of Chicanas. In making such a call, she argues for a national culture predicated on adaptation to future needs, to change and multiplicity. She names this new mythology a “mestiza culture,” and it is explicitly feminist, built “with [her] own lumber, [her] own bricks and mortar and [her] own feminist architecture” [22]. Anzaldúa’s feminism is concerned not simply with altering discursive representations of women, but with determining what kind of material resistance is possible within oppressive contexts, given what women in those contexts have to work with. The building of this new culture therefore involves not only “an accounting with all three cultures—white, Mexican, Indian,” but also “the freedom to carve and chisel [her] own face” [22]. I will deal in more depth with Anzaldúa’s call for a new culture based on a “mestiza consciousness” later. For now I want to note how this call for a dynamic culture rooted in a people’s realities echoes and expands upon Frantz Fanon’s writings on national culture.

According to Fanon, the promotion of national culture is justified if it arises out of those sociopolitical and economic issues that are the material source of the national-proletarian struggle. For this reason, the culture of a revolutionary nation is not a national “heroic past” that is unrelated to the present-day revolutionary struggles of the people. Fanon warned against a static cultural nationalism which “sets a high value on the customs, traditions, and the appearances of [the] people.” He rejected a nationalism in which the “sari becomes sacred . . . while suddenly the language of the ruling power is felt to burn your lips” [221]. This kind of nationalist cultural reification is essentially conservative, honoring and expressing what Fanon called “custom,” rather than “culture.” Fanon wrote that the “desire to attach oneself to tradition or bring abandoned traditions to life again does not only mean going against the current of history but also opposing one’s own people” [224].

In opposition to such a conservative cultural nationalism, which would glorify custom in the name of culture, Fanon and Anzaldúa urge us not to look “toward the past and away from actual events,” but to “realize that the truths of a nation are in the first place its realities” [Fanon 225]. By “realities,” I take Fanon to mean the challenges faced by a nation in the present. For Anzaldúa, then, the realities of Chicana and Chicano existence would include struggles against Anglo racism and ethnocentrism as well as sexism and homophobia within Chicano culture. In this way, Anzaldúa’s analysis of the role of the Shadow-Beast moves beyond Fanon’s conceptions by including a consideration of gender and sexuality at the center of processes of cultural formation. A call for a revolutionary mestiza culture neither simply coordinates the gender of the adjective with the gender of “culture’s” Spanish equivalent (“cultura”), nor uncritically revives a call for a culture of women. Instead, it is a feminist argument to understand gender and sexual relations as always already a part of national consciousness, the creation of national culture, and the formation of the nation-state.

Anzaldúa poses the question, "which collectivity does the daughter of a darkskinned mother listen to?" [78]. Within a Chicano cultural nationalist framework, the answer would be simple, because it always privileges the indigenous heritage of Chicanos. Chicano cultural nationalism requires loyalty to *la raza* above all else. For Anzaldúa, however, things are more complicated. She labels a nationalist position a "counterstance." The particularism inherent in the counterstance lacks the possibility of understanding and incorporating difference because "[a]ll reaction is limited by, and dependent on, what it is reacting against." "A counterstance," Anzaldúa writes, "locks one into a duel of oppressor and oppressed" [78]. The counterstance, therefore, cannot be an end in itself; we must eventually abandon it, she tells us, "on our way to a new consciousness . . . so that we are on both shores at once" [78].

In fleshing out the universalism implicit in Anzaldúa's rejection of particularism, one should note that *Borderlands/La Frontera* was published in the same year as Egyptian economist Samir Amin's *Eurocentrism*. Given the historical moment, it is significant that Anzaldúa mirrors Amin's call for a revolutionary culture that both transcends the particular (while remaining attentive to it) and makes an international solidarity and a critical, non-Eurocentric universalism conceivable. Amin argues that capitalism's expansion throughout the world was accompanied by an ideology of Eurocentrism, which asserts the uniqueness of European history. Additionally, Eurocentrism claims that the development of capitalist nations and the underdevelopment of peripheral nations correspond to essential traits of Western and non-Western cultures, thereby occluding the deliberate deindustrialization of non-Western nations characteristic of imperialism. While rejecting both the false universalism of Eurocentrism and the reifying homogenization of capitalist markets, Amin criticizes the direction anticolonial struggles have taken. In reaction to the false universalism of colonialism and Eurocentrism, these struggles have stressed particularity and difference, avoiding the question of how a revolutionary national culture can be related to the cultures of other revolutionary nations.

Because of the center-periphery polarization constitutive of capitalism, resistance to capitalist production often reaches greater intensity in underdeveloped regions than in the more prosperous, overdeveloped sectors [Amin 75, 122; Mandel 61–74]. At the same time, however, due to the imposition of Eurocentric ideologies and to colonial repression of indigenous cultures, this reaction to capitalism at the periphery has frequently taken the form not of an internationalist vision but of various particularist cultural nationalisms. These movements assert a cultural relativism that denies connections across cultures and limits the possibilities for internationalist solidarity. Like Fanon, Amin criticizes such nationalisms, specifically Islamic fundamentalism, for having a "formalist attachment to rituals" and "superficial manifestations of 'identity,'" like dress [132]. These movements frequently establish their ideological hegemony through what Amin calls a "backward-looking myth of a golden age" which "is not linked to any coherent social project whatsoever" [132]. In rejecting the counterstance, Anzaldúa is therefore joining a whole host of thinkers in trying to push anticolonial struggles beyond an attachment to reactionary particularist positions. I see Anzaldúa as involved in a critical reconceptualization of universalism as internationalist solidarity, similar to Amin's project. She goes one step further than Amin, however, by proposing what a critical universalist, anticolonial culture might look like, beginning from within a specific cultural/political context.¹⁰ As an alternative to the counterstance,

10. For a variation on this tactic, within a Cuban context, see Fernández Retamar 41, 61, 70–73.

she calls upon two ideas that have their origins in the everyday realities of Chicana existence: internationalism and mestizaje, or hybridity.¹¹

In a 1998 interview with Andrea Lunsford, Anzaldúa described herself as “a kind of international citizen whose life and privileges are not equal to the rights and privileges of ordinary, Anglo, White, Euro-American people” [Lunsford 5]. In calling for an awareness of an international perspective, Anzaldúa’s immediate concerns are the colonial situation of Chicanas and Chicanos, the neocolonial relationship between the United States and Mexico, and Mexican immigration to the United States. In an oft-cited passage, she writes that the “U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* [is an open wound] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds” [*Borderlands* 3]. She recounts an anecdote in which a young boy who is a fifth-generation US citizen is deported for not having papers [4]. A bit later, she describes the conditions of migration and immigration, noting that for many “the choice is to stay in Mexico and starve or move north and live” [10]. US economic exploitation in Mexico and military intervention and covert action in other regions of Central America have been major causes of continued Latino immigration to the United States, where Latinos have become a highly exploited reserve labor force. A liberating Chicano culture must be able to imagine itself within a space that contains not only mestizo Mexican Americans, but “pure blooded” (nonmestizo) indigenous Mexican peasants, Salvadoran Americans, and exploited workers for Du Pont, whether in the United States, Mexico, or India. She expands on this notion of solidarity (or critical universalism) in a 1993 interview with AnaLouise Keating. There she posits as a goal a notion of solidarity in which there are “connections, commonalities as well as differences. And the differences don’t get erased, and the commonalities don’t become all-important; they don’t become more important than the differences or vice versa” [Keating 111]. In other words, solidarity with other oppressed groups cannot be merely a secondary goal, as it was with Chicano cultural nationalism. Anzaldúa has learned from life in the *Borderlands* that exploitation and oppression do not recognize cultural or national borders [*Borderlands* 77, 195]. As she notes, “Gringos in the U.S. Southwest consider the inhabitants of the borderlands transgressors, aliens—whether they possess documents or not, whether they’re Chicanos, Indians or Blacks” [3].

Along with this international solidarity, Anzaldúa argues for a philosophy of hybridity as an alternative to “the policy of racial purity that white America practices” [77]. This philosophy would differ from those Chicano nationalist positions that seek an absolute, particularist indigenismo or want to preserve a “pure” mestizo Chicano culture. Anzaldúa’s mestiza consciousness moves beyond a Chicano cultural nationalist position that seeks to reclaim a sphere untainted by Anglo influence. Accordingly, mestiza consciousness is “impure” not only insofar as it draws from various cultural traditions, but also inasmuch as it arises in cross-cultural exchange, as each culture simultaneously enriches other cultures and is enriched by them.

Thus, in answer to the question of to whom the daughter of a dark-skinned mother listens, Anzaldúa offers a deliberately non-nationalist, hybrid answer. The “new mestiza” chooses those things from each culture that she deems beneficial in her struggle for self-realization and liberation [82]. At this point, Anzaldúa’s theory must deal with questions

11. “Hybridity” in this essay distinguishes the historical process of racial mixing (through sexual relations) in Latin America (mestizaje) from Anzaldúa’s theoretical extrapolation from mestizaje: hybridity understood as any mixing of cultures, languages, or philosophies. This does not follow Anzaldúa’s own use of the terms, but makes an analytical distinction that I believe to be crucial. In *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa often fails to distinguish between mestizaje, cultural hybridity, and any kind of blending whatsoever, although she later clarifies her terminology [Keating 129]; see note 17, below.

like the following: How does the new mestiza determine which things to take and which to leave? and, How does she integrate those things that she deems beneficial? Another issue that Anzaldúa's answer brings up is the conflict between autonomous agency and determinacy: To what extent is the new mestiza able to make such choices consciously and deliberately? The final two sections of this essay will examine the challenges that these questions make to Anzaldúa's theory and explore one possible response to those challenges.

Internationalism and Hybridity: Possible Challenges

Might Anzaldúa's celebration of hybridity and "border-crossing," as some have suggested, prove to be an ideology easily adapted to transnational capitalism and corporate multiculturalism?¹² Neither internationalism nor hybridity entails a necessary resistance to either capitalism or domination. What is the value of hybridity, if capitalism produces its own forms of it? Cultural mixing might save only those aspects of each culture that prove most useful to transnational capitalism, generating new forms of multicultural mystification and domination. How does one determine which hybrid is illustrative of the new mestiza consciousness: Chicano Spanish or Taco Bell? In short, what framework does Anzaldúa provide for saying the consciousness of the Borderlands manifests itself in Caló and not in the postmodern Enchirito® (Taco Bell's enchilada-burrito hybrid), or in both?

Since the breaking down of "rigid boundaries" and "borders and walls" matters as much to free trade as to anticolonial resistance and Chicana feminism, the crucial difference must lie in the form that this breaking down takes. In other words, Anzaldúa's theory must evaluate among hybrids. She acknowledges this, and, while she argues for a tolerance for ambiguity, she writes that the new mestiza "strengthens her tolerance (*and intolerance*) for ambiguity" [82, emphasis mine]. I have emphasized "and intolerance" because most critics fail to mention these words when making reference to this passage [for example, Barnard 50; Fowlkes 118; Grewal 250], as if it is inconsequential that Anzaldúa urges us to have (albeit parenthetically) an *intolerance* for ambiguity. Anzaldúa does not tell us in this passage which ambiguities to tolerate and which not to tolerate, although she stresses the importance of valuing oppressed cultures and people (for example, Native Americans and *jotería* (queer folk)).

At times, Anzaldúa is clearly in line with theorists like the Cuban linguist and philosopher Roberto Fernández Retamar, who argues that Latin Americans should choose cultural identification with the most oppressed sectors of their societies [Fernández Retamar 27]. At other times, however, Anzaldúa's argument loses the specificity it needs, and there is little to distinguish the new mestiza from the Enchirito® of late capitalism. This happens, for example, when she describes the importance of gay men and lesbians as border crossers: "homosexuals have strong bonds with the queer white, Black, Asian, Native American, Latino, and with the queer in Italy, Australia and the rest of the planet. . . . Our role is to link people with each other—the Blacks with Jews with Indians with Asians with whites with extraterrestrials" [*Borderlands* 84–85]. The juggling of cultures, blurring of cultural boundaries, and appropriation of modes of living characteristic of profit-motivated corporate multiculturalism seem at times to resemble the practice of "the new mestiza":

12. On corporate multiculturalism, see the Chicago Cultural Studies Group 550–52.

The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else. [79]

Anzaldúa is developing a new epistemology here, but one needs to be careful to ask, what makes this new, what makes it different from capitalist contradiction and flux? Surely a late capitalist epistemology also needs to sustain contradictions, to be plural, to juggle cultures, and to tolerate ambiguity, and, although it does not ground itself in the resistance of the oppressed, it has proved remarkably successful in adapting that resistance to its own purposes. Anzaldúa has acknowledged this aspect of capitalist culture in the Keating interview, characterizing it, similarly to Amin, as a homogenizing unity [Keating 110]. I will return to her response to this capitalist homogenization in the next section. First, I want to engage seriously with objections that some have raised to the ways *Borderlands* figures the new mestiza epistemology.

Melissa Wright has demonstrated how some women of Mexican descent have made places for themselves at the management level within the maquiladora¹³ industry:

Rosalia and Cynthia . . . both effectively pull the image of the mexicana from the shadows of maquiladora offices and production floors and place her front and center with respect to the positions of power in those firms. They are new mestizas, therefore, in the sense detailed by Anzaldúa, insofar as they have reinvented themselves as women of power whose base emanates from their cultural heritage and knowledge of the worlds defined by the border and borderlands. Yet clearly they are not the sort of new mestizas Anzaldúa had in mind, for the joint effects of their self-inventions . . . also work to exclude other mexicanas from the material and social benefits accruing to maquiladora managers. [Wright 129]

While Wright's argument often demonstrates a lack of generosity toward the complexity of Anzaldúa's thinking, I believe that she vividly and succinctly illustrates the potential dangers of some interpretations of *Borderlands*. The need to make distinctions between resistant and nonresistant instances of hybridity, however, should not be confused with a drive to find the perfect form of resistance that can never be recuperated by forces of domination. One should not ask Anzaldúa to provide an untainted space of resistance, but her theory does owe us a sense of how and when different forms of hybridity might prove more and less resistant to given instances of domination. In other words, I am curious to see how her new epistemology will aid us in discerning the differences between Enchiritos® and mestizos.

Moreover, one might worry that Anzaldúa sometimes seems to relegate the possibilities for change to vague, unspecified subconscious processes. She writes, for example, that the new mestiza can move beyond choques by an "event which inverts or resolves the ambivalence," but she is "not sure exactly how. The work takes place underground—subconsciously. It is work that the soul performs" [79]. She adds that this entails a "massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness" [80]. I do not deny that change needs to take place in the way we think

13. *Maquiladoras are export-producing factories located on the Mexican side of the US-Mexican border. They are usually foreign-owned and employ Mexican labor (usually female) at extremely low wages.*

and how we conceptualize ourselves and the world around us. However, exploitation and dualistic thinking are not necessarily linked. Consider, for example, the orgy of indigenismo, mestizofilia, and hybridity which constitutes much of consumer culture in Mexico (and, increasingly, in the United States under the rubrics of *diversity* and *multiculturalism*), even as actual indigenous peasants and mestizo workers are kept in wretched poverty. She writes, for example, that “[t]he struggle is inner. . . . *The struggle has always been inner*. . . . Nothing happens in the ‘real’ world unless it first happens in the images in our head” [87, emphasis mine]. Passages like these make her description of the new mestiza seem at times overly voluntarist and idealist, insofar as such moments contradict other places in her work that describe the limitations placed on people’s ability to do and think what they want and the need for material change in their conditions of existence.¹⁴ Elsewhere, she has stressed the point that “we can’t just escape and say, ‘Oh this is just a play on some kind of stage and it doesn’t really matter.’ . . . it’s a matter of life and death. So these things can only be worked out in physical reality” [Keating 118]. Additionally, she has cited activism as her primary motivation in her cultural work, writing that “it wasn’t enough just to sit and write and work on my computer. I had to connect the real-life, bodily experiences of people who were suffering because of some kind of oppression” [Lunsford 25]. She has also written, “I can’t discount the fact of the thousands that go to bed hungry every night. The thousands that do numbing shitwork eight hours a day each day of their lives. . . . I can’t reconcile the sight of a battered child with the belief that we choose what happens to us, that we create our own world” [“La Prieta” 208].

In light of these commitments, Anzaldúa qualifies her claim that “nothing is thrust out . . . nothing rejected, nothing abandoned” by describing the process of discarding oppressive elements from the cultures we inherit. This is difficult, she tells us, but we must take on the task of differentiating between what is good and what is bad in the “baggage” of mixed cultures, putting “history through a sieve, winnow[ing] out the lies, [and] look[ing] at the forces that we as a race, as women, have been a part of” [82]. She adds that this is a *conscious* rupture with oppressive traditions, *not* only a “subconscious” or “underground” process. At this point Anzaldúa begins to provide a framework so that one can distinguish between the Enchirito® and the new mestiza. With an acknowledgement of these tensions in Anzaldúa’s works, I would like to now move on to a consideration of her alternative to nationalism.

From Aztlán to the Borderlands

Anzaldúa begins *Borderlands* by detailing multiple examples of racial and economic exploitation, demonstrating an awareness of the material forms that capitalist and gender exploitation take. She then ends the prose half of her book with a return to the physical borderlands, where nothing has changed in the poverty of her people. Are we to believe that the spiritual rejuvenation she outlines in the middle chapters will result in changes here, on the US-Mexican border? Or does she, in the final chapter, acknowledge that it will not, at least not directly, that the inner struggles are only a part of the battle, and that one must transform the knowledge gained in the regenerative psychological and spiritual processes that she outlines into political action? Anzaldúa characterizes the “Coatlicue

14. Lugones notes a similar difficulty with Anzaldúa’s text, construing it as unduly emphasizing the psychology of oppression, which then can imply a solitary individualism [“On Borderlands” 32]. Hedley disagrees with Lugones, arguing that Anzaldúa’s political intervention is a “prophetic” one and that the exceptionalist and individualist aspects of the text should therefore not be surprising [Hedley 46–49].

State” as an unpleasant and difficult reckoning with fear and the Shadow-Beast [48]. From where does this Coatlicue State come? Does it arise out of material experience, and, if so, which experiences? Should one conceptualize this state as a part of political action, arising out of action and simultaneously enabling it, rather than simply a “prelude” to it, as Anzaldúa sometimes implies [48]? These are the crucial questions that Anzaldúa’s theory must be able to address.

To answer these questions, I want to offer a reading of *Borderlands* that emphasizes the materialist aspects of Anzaldúa’s critique of nationalism. I believe that *Borderlands* has much to contribute to resistant struggles against both colonial oppression and the oppressive aspects of anticolonial nationalism. In drawing from a specific cultural context in the present, it also offers an alternative to a cultural nationalist return to the past. Anzaldúa’s Chicana feminist mythology attempts to give us an *original relation* to the past.¹⁵ By an “original relation” I mean something different from a simple return to the past. An original relation to the past represents a new way of relating to the past; it responds to the needs of the present and remains dynamic, rather than traditional or custom-bound. Anzaldúa’s new and dynamic myth of the new mestiza challenges nationalism as much as custom and particularity comfort it.

Anzaldúa reconciles liberating feminist concerns to a powerful legacy and communal mythology by displacing the myth of Chicano cultural nationalism from a physical landscape to an explicitly metaphysical terrain.¹⁶ Even so, the source for her mythology retains its origin in Chicana reality. In her preface, she explains:

*The actual physical borderland that I’m dealing with in this book is the Texas-US Southwest/Mexican border. The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact, the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy.*¹⁷

In response to the limitations of nationalism, Anzaldúa turns cultural mythology and national consciousness into tools for liberating the Chicana mind. She understands that no uncritical return to pre-Columbian belief systems can provide liberation. Ancient Meso-American cultures based themselves on exploitation and the oppression of women and others just like modern Anglo, Indian, Chicano, and Mexican cultures. Anzaldúa calls for something new, something not-yet that will draw from the past but will not be a return to it.

The topography of the psychological and mythic terrain she describes is the key, because it is a place filled with contradiction, pain, and discomfort. Growth of the self and transformation of consciousness, Anzaldúa wants us to be sure, cannot happen when

15. I owe the expression “original relation to the past” to Genaro Padilla’s discussion of Luis Valdez; however, the specific meaning that I attribute to the phrase is my own.

16. Anzaldúa’s approach to this reconciliation differs from that of Chicana feminist Cherrie Moraga in her essay “Queer Aztlán,” although she, too, notes that, “[u]nlike the island of Puerto Rico whose ‘homeland’ is clearly defined by ocean on all sides, Aztlán at times seems more metaphysical than physical territory” [153].

17. Since *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa has sought to distinguish the “actual southwest borderlands” from the metaphysical Borderlands by use of lower case and capital letters and has also used “nepantla” to denote the psychological, spiritual, and emotional borderlands [Keating 129]. In retaining the term “Borderlands” here, however, I seek to stress her philosophy’s relationship to nationalism.

one is comfortable. Her theorization of the Borderlands makes struggle, particularly feminist and anticolonial struggle, a foremost aspect of her mestiza culture. “It’s not a comfortable territory to live in, this place of contradictions,” she writes in her preface. Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands* expose “hatred, anger, and exploitation” as “prominent features of this landscape” in order to recognize and overcome the contradictions of exploitation and domination. In other words, part of what Anzaldúa seeks in a resistant ambiguity (or hybridity, or contradiction) is a foregrounding, rather than an occlusion, of relations of oppression. Some contradictions, like that between nationalism and feminism, some hybrids, like the racially or sexually impure, have a potential (under the right circumstances) for revealing certain instances of domination, thereby enabling resistance. The mythology of the Borderlands is one that celebrates such moments and such possibilities, encouraging their creation and development. The Coatlicue State that figures prominently in the mythology of *Borderlands* and that enables mestiza consciousness emphasizes the possibility for resolution of contradictions that have caused choques in the mind of the individual and in the consciousness of the community. The Coatlicue State is always a “prelude to crossing,” an opportunity for release and change, and is brought on by choques and the repression of the Shadow-Beast. The Meso-American goddess Coatlicue gains significance here as a force of change; Anzaldúa implicitly contrasts this force to cultural nationalism’s rigidity and cultural conservatism.

Additionally, whereas a strict, territory-based nationalism can be an obstacle when trying to work, for example, with Filipino workers to unionize vineyards (what does one do with an Asian in Aztlán?), Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands*, present “wherever two or more cultures edge each other,” allow for a framework of cooperation between “los atravesados” (border crossers). The oppressed, whether citizens of Aztlán or not, are all inhabitants of the Borderlands. In *Borderlands*, “mestiza consciousness” ties itself through various referents to the knowledge of Chicana and Mexican women. In this way, as with the borderlands, there always remains an original source for Anzaldúa’s work in the material existence of a specific population. For Anzaldúa, it has always been important to address an audience beyond a single national, ethnic, sexual, or gender group, yet she notes in a 1982 interview that she finds the best way to do this is to write “very concretely about particulars” [*Interviews* 60]. She alternates this concrete, particular writing with a more prophetic, mythic mode. In these other passages, she elaborates a mythology that can be tailored to concrete existence, however, as she describes in a later interview: “A lot of times I will start with a cultural figure from the precolonial: *Coatlicue*, or *la Llorona*. Then I look at the experience in 1997 that Chicanos and Chicanas are going through, and I try to see a connection to what was going on then” [Lunsford 17].

Furthermore, Anzaldúa moves nationalism to a metaphysical, psychological and spiritual terrain and, in so doing, argues that others in positions of relative privilege (for example, whites and men) can acquire “mestiza consciousness,” opening up possibilities of alliance foreclosed by nationalism. She further develops these possibilities with her theorization of nepantla after the writing of *Borderlands*. She speaks in an interview of nepantla, characterizing it as the spaces where worlds, identities, and cultures overlap: “When I give my talks I use an overhead projector with a transparency of a little stick figure con un pie en un mundo y otro pie en otro mundo y todos estos mundos [with one foot in one world and another foot in another world and all of these worlds] overlap: this is your race, your sexual orientation, here you’re a Jew Chicana, here an academic, here an artist, there a blue-collar worker. Where these spaces overlap is nepantla, the Borderlands” [*Interviews* 239]. This concept of nepantla is partly prefigured in *Borderlands* when Anzaldúa characterizes mestiza consciousness as a generalized phenomenon, akin to the way that proletarian “class consciousness” in the Marxist tradition is neither limited to members of the proletariat nor obtained automatically by

members of that class. While mestiza consciousness is not fixed within a specific racial, sexual, or national category, however, the way that people acquire it always depends on their own social location.¹⁸ Different points of origin inside and outside the Borderlands will result in different psychological choques, and different processes of struggle.

Thus, the voluntarist aspects of how one chooses to respond to choques are conditioned by the nonarbitrary aspects of one's social location in relation to others. So, for example, Anzaldúa writes that

[Whites] will come to see that they are not helping us but following our lead. . . We need to say to white society: We need you to accept the fact that Chicanos are different, to acknowledge your rejection and negation of us. We need you to own the fact that you looked upon us as less than human, that you stole our lands, our personhood, our self-respect. [83–84]

One thing that remains consistent in the process of coming to mestiza consciousness, of undertaking the necessary project of psychological and spiritual reformation required by the Coatlicue State, is concrete struggle. Throughout her interviews, Anzaldúa returns again and again to her experiences of fragmentation in the Chicano Movement and the feminist movement, and within her family and the academy. Mestiza consciousness is always achieved only through such painful and traumatic experiences of falling apart and coming back together again [*Borderlands* 46–51]. What comes out of it is a reconciliation with multiple frames of reference, multiple worlds of sense:

Why does she have to go and try to make 'sense' of it all? Every time she makes 'sense' of something, she has to 'cross over,' kicking a hole out of the old boundaries of the self and slipping under or over, dragging the old skin along, stumbling over it. . . . It is a dry birth, a breech birth, a screaming birth, one that fights her every inch of the way. It is only when she is on the other side . . . and the lid from her eyes lifts that she sees things in a different perspective. It is only then that she makes the connections, formulates the insights. It is only then that her consciousness expands a tiny notch. [Borderlands 49]

Mestiza consciousness is something that one resists at first because it involves questioning oneself, giving up old ways of seeing the world, and synthesizing new ones.

In *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa creates in mythic and symbolic terms the philosophy of a Chicana feminism concerned with neither the creation of a Chicano nation nor the mere reclamation of an indigenous past. Specifically in relation to Chicano nationalism, she characterizes this as an opening up, an expanding of the possibilities for political solidarity and alliance:

[W]hat happens when our sense of tribe and identity changes, when it expands . . . We [Chicana feminists] have returned to the tribe, but our nationalism is one with a twist. It's no longer the old kind of "I'm separated from this other group because I'm a Chicana so I therefore don't have anything to do with blacks or with Asians or whatever." It's saying, "Yes I belong. I come from this particular tribe, but I'm open to interacting with these other people." I call this the New Tribalism. It's a kind of mestizaje that allows for connecting with other ethnic groups and interacting with other cultures and ideas. [Interviews 185]

18. For a nonparticularist account of the epistemological importance of identity and social location, see Mohanty, "Epistemic Status" 45–55.

Her mythology seeks to address the complete liberation of women, Chicanos, blacks, lesbians and gay men, poor whites, and everyone else in the US and elsewhere [*Borderlands* 84–85]. In this way, she defuses many of the difficult questions that Chicano nationalism has never been able to answer adequately, such as why a Chicano claim to the land should be more valid than Navajo, Ute, or Hopi claims or why Mexicans and Chicanos of Mayan, Yaqui, or Zapotec descent should relate to the mythic homeland of the Aztecs. The forging of this solidarity and the development of the new mestiza culture must happen during and through the struggle against domination and exploitation; it cannot happen in advance, or not only so.

She offers the mythology of the Borderlands as a cultural center for the concrete, historical struggles from which it derives. According to this reading of Anzaldúa's text, the spiritualism of her "psychic Borderlands" has value in relation to concrete struggles within the Borderlands. Indeed, she ends the prose section of *Borderlands* by showing us the material direction in which to release our Coatlicue energy: we must struggle to change the material conditions of existence. It can be no accident that the prose section of the text is framed by material struggles: the *mojados* crossing from Mexico to California in the first chapter and her family trying to make a living on their Texas farm in the seventh. In between, Anzaldúa shows us the path toward moral and psychological rejuvenation. Psychological and spiritual reformation is only a part, albeit an important one, of the project of liberation [see Keating 117–18]. It is a necessary part of liberation, however, for two reasons. First, to quote Marx's third thesis on Feuerbach, "The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men who change circumstances and that it is essential to educate the educator himself" [Marx and Engels 144]. It is certainly no coincidence that nearly every major anticolonial theorist of the past half-century has written extensively on art and political education, from Mao to Fanon, Guevara to Freire. It is a matter of struggling against the current of ideology to transform the way people think. Second, as Anzaldúa urges us to remember, to leave out spirituality in our quest for postcolonial liberation is to assume that "the spiritual" is nonmaterial, existing in a realm of pure idea. This is precisely the assumption of Western rationality that Anzaldúa most passionately urges us to question. She writes in *Borderlands* that "[w]e've been taught that the spirit is outside our bodies or above our heads somewhere up in the sky with God. We're supposed to forget that every cell in our bodies, every bone and bird and worm has spirit in it" [36]. Spirituality for Anzaldúa is not an escapist metaphysics, but an ethical force that binds us to concrete reality.

At this point, it is useful to consider Anzaldúa's theories within the context of other anticolonial thinkers of the twentieth century who have addressed the issues of national culture, imperialism, and liberation. In the context of the Guinea-Bissau war of independence, for example, Amílcar Cabral argued that culture has its source in economic and political life. In his view, culture is continually in flux, "simultaneously the fruit of a people's history and a determinant of history, by the positive or negative influence which it exerts on the evolution of relationships between man and his environment, among men or groups of men within a society, as well as among different societies" [41]. For Cabral, national culture is not only internally diverse (always containing both progressive and reactionary elements), but externally influenced (both positively and negatively) by other cultures. Therefore, the course of development for liberating national culture includes "positive accretions from the oppressor and other cultures." It also entails a "return to the upward paths of [one's] own culture, which is nourished by the living reality of its environment, and which negates both harmful influences and any

kind of subjection to foreign culture” [43].¹⁹ These “upward paths” result from and are enabled by resistance and struggle. Thus, in Cabral’s program for fostering revolutionary culture in Guinea-Bissau, he stresses that it is necessary neither to return to some uncontaminated past nor to move into a new future without cultural difference. Instead, he urges a move forward based on positive cultural traits developed during the national liberation struggle (women’s equality, expanded health care, the spirit of sacrifice and justice, universal participation in social affairs, and so on). Such a concrete but flexible program demonstrates an interesting counterpoint to Anzaldúa’s more predominantly spiritual vision of revolutionary culture.²⁰ I do not want to suggest that these two visions are incompatible, only that Cabral provides a good framework within which to understand how the spiritualism and materialism of *Borderlands* can relate to the project of building revolutionary culture. Cabral views national culture as always already hybrid and sees future hybridization as necessary and desirable. He thus parallels much of Anzaldúa’s reworking of Chicano cultural nationalism: “It is important to be conscious of the value of African cultures . . . to determine, in the general framework of the struggle for progress, what contribution African culture has made and can make, and what are the contributions it can or must receive from elsewhere” [Cabral 52]. In addition, both writers see political and personal struggle as the process through which culture and consciousness are transformed.

Anzaldúa has noted her own views on how she can best contribute to emancipatory culture, citing her work as an editor, bringing women of color’s voices to the fore, and changing consciousness about oppression and resistance [Lunsford 24–25]. Through two recent books, *Prietita and the Ghost Woman = Prietita y La Llorona* and *Friends from the Other Side = Amigos del otro lado*, she has provided another kind of answer to the question of how consciousness itself can be changed concretely. Whereas *Borderlands* elaborated a potential spiritual center for a future revolutionary culture, Anzaldúa’s two children’s books attempt to bring a new consciousness into being through the creation of new “myths” directed at children. *Friends from the Other Side* is marked as a Chicano text by Anzaldúa’s use of Chicano Spanish and the consistent use of cultural signifiers in Consuelo Méndez’s illustrations (for example, a picture of La Virgen de Guadalupe and a lotería game). The narrative, in which a young Chicana named Prietita befriends a young Mexican undocumented immigrant, Joaquín, and hides him and his mother from the immigration authorities, addresses a number of issues brought up in *Borderlands*. Among these are questions of self and other, solidarity across differences, and the relationship between culture and liberation. The last of these questions figures most prominently in the role of the herb woman who helps Prietita, Joaquín, and his mother and teaches Prietita at the end of the story how to gather the herbs to heal the boils on Joaquín’s arms. This conclusion incorporates Prietita into a female tradition of knowledge and healing, as well as a politically resistant community that works together to protect the undocumented family. In *Prietita and the Ghost Woman*, Anzaldúa moves even further in the direction of rewriting traditional Chicano culture, in the process creating a new, liberating, and critical culture. She takes the figure of La Llorona, a mythic woman who drowned her children and haunts rivers forever crying over her loss and searching for other children, and presents her as a helpful and empowering figure in the life of the young girl, Prietita. This retelling of the Llorona legend works against the grain of established cultural traditions, enabling children and their parents to question and struggle with inherited values. Anzaldúa writes in a note at the end of this book that, by

19. See Anzaldúa on her *nos/otras* concept [Interviews 254].

20. Of course, Anzaldúa should not be faulted for lacking the specificity of Cabral. Cabral had the advantage of describing a social process as it was occurring, rather than trying to prescribe a process for change in advance.

demonstrating what might lie beneath the surface of this legend about women, she hopes to “encourage children to look beneath the surface of what things seem to be in order to discover the truths that may be hidden.”

Through such texts, Anzaldúa has embarked on the long and arduous project of realizing the *mestiza* consciousness she calls for in *Borderlands* and fostering its growth. In this way, Anzaldúa astutely demonstrates one avenue for undertaking “psychic reformation” concurrently with, or in the absence of, economic transformation. The world of Prietita may not be one without Shadow-Beasts, but it does represent an oppositional culture of resistance that engages with its own Shadow-Beasts. In foregrounding the inadequacy of static models of culture and tradition for contemporary resistance, Anzaldúa’s work might help to heighten cultural choques, bringing about the discomfort and struggle that typify the Coatlicue State, the Borderlands, and *nepantla*. Only through such struggle and discomfort can new myths be born, guiding us toward a future of changed circumstances. In this way, Anzaldúa resists giving us a utopian vision of a future “after the revolution,” opting instead for the project of describing and contributing to the creation of a culture of resistance, questioning, and change.

In closing, I want to offer an answer to the question my title asks, “How does one tell a *mestizo* from an *Enchirito*®?” My answer is informed by the thinking of Anzaldúa, as well as Fanon and Cabral. One must look to the specific historical and material conditions that frame the creation and development of these two hybrids. On the level of an intellectual abstraction, a differentiation between *Enchirito*® and *mestizo* cannot be made. The differences lie in the specificity of their social locations and their relationships to historical forces of capitalism and colonialism. This is not to say that what matters is whether their points of origin are either resistant or hegemonic, but rather that their transforming, complex relationships to capitalism and colonialism must constantly be evaluated. Thus, Taco Bell’s *Enchirito*® is a hybrid cultural form produced within a US consumer market in which various Mexican and Mexican American cultural signifiers are extracted from their cultural (and political) contexts. Here, hybridity is repackaged as a fast food item unrecognizable apart from a US cultural economy and always tied to Anglo-American profit (since the transnational corporation, Taco Bell, is Anglo-American owned) and worker exploitation. By contrast, *mestizo* takes its cultural and political significance within Mexican and Chicano contexts that remain unintelligible to a hegemonic US racial order. Within an Anglo US understanding of race and race relations, *mestizo* identity powerfully challenges binary conceptions and laws of hypodescent (“one drop” rules). The anemic category of *mixed race* that has been urged by census reformers does little to translate the particular resistant connotations of *mestizo* (within a US context), given the history of Anglo domination in the US Southwest and the particular salience of Chicanas’ and Chicanos’ Native American and African ancestry. In embracing hybridity as a resistant political strategy, we must be on guard to always ask: where is the hybridity taking place, in whose interests, in what ways, and to what ends?²¹ To return to Wright’s challenge to Anzaldúa, the *maquiladora* managers are not new *mestizas*, because Anzaldúa’s category is not a formal one, including only necessary and sufficient conditions. *Mestiza* consciousness also entails an attention to harm and is future-oriented, anticipating liberating possibilities in a nonindividualized manner.

Taking from each culture that which is useful and beneficial in her struggle for liberation as a woman, as a Chicana, as a lesbian, the new *mestiza* demonstrates the possibilities for realizing the vision of a non-nationalist, liberating culture. This liberating culture of the new *mestiza* can in turn be one among many to be nourished by and to

21. I am indebted to Joshua Price in the formulation of these questions. For other projects addressing these questions, see Fusco; Lugones [“Hybridization”].

nourish other dynamic and progressive cultures.²² It is therefore in the process of making distinctions within the realm of the particular that a critical universalism, a relating to others across differences, becomes possible. The most revolutionary claim in Anzaldúa's work, then, is that the struggle to physically, spiritually, and psychologically decolonize bodies and land within the Borderlands is perhaps a truer concept of liberation than traditional struggle to liberate "the nation."

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22. *The difficulties and benefits of this mutually enhancing and non-dominating intercultural exchange are suggested in the work of philosopher María Lugones ["Playfulness" 4–12], literary critic Satya Mohanty ["Colonial Legacies" 113–16], and anthropologist Renato Rosaldo [46–67].*

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