

"I write because I'm scared of writing, but I'm more scared of not writing"
Gloria E. Anzaldúa

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"30 años de *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*
de Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa"

Editora invitada: Norma E. Cantú

"A Contextual Interpretation of *This Bridge Called My Back*:
Nationalism, Androcentrism and the Means of Cultural Representation"

TEREZA JIROUTOVÁ

"Queeremos a Gloria Anzaldúa: Identity, Difference, New Tribalism,
and Affective Eco-Dialogues"

CAROLINA NÚÑEZ-PUENTE

"Pensamiento y práctica transfronterizos"

ROMANA RADLWIMMER

"Gloria Anzaldúa y el giro descolonial desde la frontera para el mundo"

MARÍA DEL SOCORRO GUTIÉRREZ MAGALLANES

"Anzaldúa: Authentic Leadership and Indigenous Feminism in XXIst Century"

ISABEL DULFANO

"Theory as Interruption: What Inter(re)feres / La Teoría como
interrupción: lo que se atraviesa"

MARISA BELAUSTEGUIGOITIA RIUS

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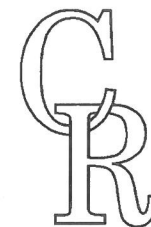
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Queridos colegas:

Intento recordar algún congreso de literatura chicana a los que he asistido en las últimas décadas, y no puedo citar uno solo en el que no se hayan presentado comunicaciones sobre Gloria Anzaldúa y su inmortal *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Se acaban de cumplir tres décadas de su publicación y continúa siendo el referente indiscutible, con la misma fuerza y vigencia del momento de su publicación. Para quienes nos encontramos a este lado del Atlántico, la obra de Anzaldúa adquiere una singular significación al superar el espacio fronterizo –nunca mejor dicho– entre Méjico y Estados Unidos, logrando interesar la realidad de una nueva Europa cada día más híbrida y heterogénea.

Para conmemorar las tres décadas de su publicación hemos invitado como editora del volumen a la profesora y novelista Norma Cantú que ha logrado reunir a todo un elenco de los más reputados especialistas en la autora tejana.

Camino Real está abierta a la colaboración con otras instituciones e investigadores, especialmente en Norteamérica. En este sentido, me gustaría finalmente invitar a colegas y grupos de investigación en disciplinas como Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades de los Estados Unidos a participar como *Guest Editor* en futuros volúmenes proponiendo temas de interés para la académica comunidad hispano-latina de Estados Unidos.

Agradezco una vez más vuestra confianza en *Camino Real*; gracias a vuestras colaboraciones esta publicación del Instituto Franklin-UAH es ya referencial en el estudio de los hispanos-latinos en Estados Unidos a ambos lados del Atlántico.

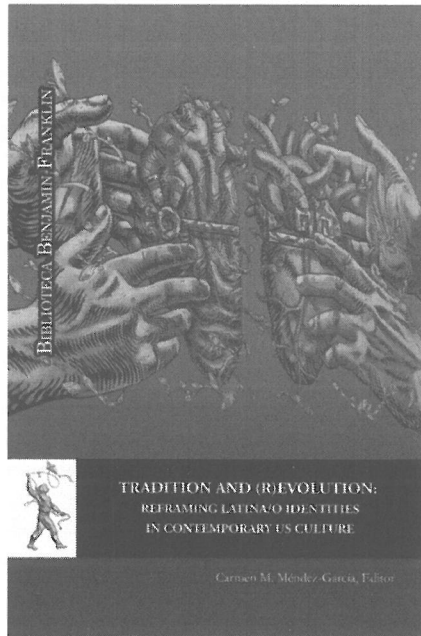
Un cordial saludo,

José Antonio Gurpegui

Editor

Tradition and (R)evolution: Reframing Latina/o Identities in Contemporary US Culture

Carmen M. Méndez-García, Editor



Tradition and (R)evolution: Reframing Latina/o Identities in Contemporary US Culture recognizes and celebrates the fluidity and multiplicity of Latina/o identity as positive, challenging, often terrifying, but necessarily invigorating. Constructing our personal identity, taking note of what has constructed us, is what allows us to acknowledge and be attracted to similarities, or to be intrigued by dissimilarities, in other personal identities. It is what enables us to group together in communal identities. The fictions, children's books, memoirs, poetry, and films analyzed in this book are testimonies to the importance of looking at the past, of remembering, of recognizing our heritage, but also of looking to the future, re-imagining ourselves, and reframing our communities and their identities.

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Queeremos a Gloria Anzaldúa: Identity, Difference, New Tribalism, and Affective Eco-Dialogues¹

CAROLINA NÚÑEZ-PUENTE

ABSTRACT

This article starts by conceptualizing Anzaldúa's (and other thinkers') approaches to poetry, queerness, identity, and difference from *Borderlands* (1987) to later works. Part two examines her thoughts on new tribalism, most of which appeared in *Interviews/Entrevistas* (2000), *This Bridge We Call Home* (2002), *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* (2009), and *Light in the Dark* (2015). Both sections also describe the possible dialogues between her poetry and prose. Part three takes dialogical connections further, by putting Anzaldúa into an affective eco-dialogue (my term) with contemporary feminists. The article's thesis is that Anzaldúa's queer way of feeling-thinking-being marked the style, themes, and goals of her oeuvre; furthermore, given her ability to go beyond binary oppositions by means of articulating difference in an affective, dialogical, and ecofeminist fashion, Anzaldúa must be considered a posthumanist philosopher.

Keywords: Affective eco-dialogue, queer approach, ecofeminism

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RESUMEN

Este artículo comienza conceptualizando los enfoques de Anzaldúa (y otros/as pensadores/as) sobre poesía, *queerness*, identidad y diferencia desde *Borderlands* (1987) hasta obras posteriores. La segunda parte examina sus ideas sobre *new tribalism*, la mayoría de las cuales aparecieron en *Interviews/Entrevistas* (2000), *This Bridge We Call Home* (2002), *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* (2009) y *Light in the Dark* (2015). Ambas secciones también describen los posibles diálogos entre su poesía y su prosa. La tercera parte lleva las conexiones dialógicas más allá, poniendo a Anzaldúa en lo que llamo un eco-diálogo afectivo con las feministas contemporáneas. La tesis del artículo es que la forma *queer* de sentir-pensar-ser de Anzaldúa marcó el estilo, los temas y los objetivos de su obra; además, dada su capacidad para ir más allá de las oposiciones binarias mediante la articulación de la diferencia de una manera afectiva, dialógica y ecofeminista, Anzaldúa debe considerarse una filósofa posthumanista.

Palabras clave: Eco-diálogo afectivo, acercamiento *queer*, eco-feminismo

1. IDENTITY, DIFFERENCE, AND QUEER THEORY: FROM POETRY TO DIALOGUE

Poetry's ability to bridge apparently opposite realms was already known by the Aztecs, who celebrated poetry's power in the floral games they called *flor y canto*. When Anzaldúa recalled that tradition, she added that the writer—above all the poet—was thought to be a *nagual* who had the shamanistic power to transform not only him-herself but also the audience (1999: 88, 96-97). Therefore, poetry has the power, not only to bridge different worlds and peoples, but also to transform all of them. From a feminist perspective, poetry is an excellent means to fight, not only patriarchal language, but also patriarchal culture (Kristeva). Furthermore, poetry's revolutionary potential should lead to a world of ethical relations and solidarity. This idea was shared by Anzaldúa, who wrote: "We are implicated in each other's lives" (Ikas 243); "todas somos nos/otras" and must "develop a perspective that takes into account the whole planet" (Anzaldúa 2002b: 3). According to Diane Freedman, Anzaldúa is "both/either, straddling and striving beyond borders" (51), and the lines of her "poetry, like borders, represent both [the] division and connection" she is capable of (54). I believe it was thanks to her poetic queer way of being that Anzaldúa was able to theorize about

concepts which go beyond patriarchal binary logic—e.g. her well-known *mestiza* consciousness, *El Mundo Zurdo*, and new tribalism.

The original meaning of queer is "Strange, odd, peculiar, eccentric" (OED). This meaning allows me to define Anzaldúa's use both of Spanish and poetry as queer, considering that she published her work in a mainly English-speaking, prose-reading country. Today, most Western(ized) people would relate queer simply to same-sex desire. However, for Richard Rodríguez queer "reconfigurations are always provisional" (325). In a similar vein, queer theorist Annamarie Jagose adds that queer is "a category in the process of formation [...] part of [whose] [...] political efficacy [...] depends on its resistance to definition" (1). From here we come to the conclusion that the meaning of queer, like the meaning of poetry, not only is but must be unfixed. According to Elizabeth Grosz, being attracted by the same sex is not enough to be queer, whereas being heterosexual can actually be queer; it all depends on what one does with one's sexuality: "it is only beyond modes of repetition that any subversion is considered possible" (208). Queer is not a synonym of gay or lesbian either. Furthermore, unlike what lesbian/gay and LGBT studies have unintentionally provoked, queer studies position themselves against the "profound naturalization of the dominant system of sexual classification" (Hall and Jagose xvi).

In a revealing quote, Eve Sedgwick wrote about "One of the things that 'queer' can refer to the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically" (8). Grosz's argument on the subversive potential of queerness together with Sedgwick's references to gaps and resonances remind us again of poetry. Sedgwick went on to provide an overview of the more contemporary uses of queer, proving the term's ongoing process of renewal. She said, "the most exciting work around 'queer' spins the term [...] [around] the ways race, ethnicity, postcolonial nationality criss-cross with [gender and sexuality] and other identity-constituting, identity-fracturing discourses" (8-9). Then, Sedgwick named "Gloria Anzaldúa" among those "using the leverage 'queer' to do a new kind of justice to the fractal intricacies of language, skin, migration, state" (9).

Already in *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa had come out of the closet by saying: "For the lesbian of color, the ultimate rebellion she can make against her native culture is through her sexual behavior [...] Being lesbian and raised Catholic, indoctrinated as straight, I 'made the choice to be queer'" (1999, 41). In her confession, Anzaldúa makes clear the intricate bonds between race, culture, religion, and sexuality. In a later text, "To(o) Queer the Writer—Loca, escritora y chicana," Anzaldúa stated: "I identify

myself most closely with the Náhuatl term *patlache* [...] [since it] situate[s] me in South Texas Chicano/mexicano culture” (2009c: 163). This statement confirms her earlier wish not to split the self’s sexuality from its other facets. Anzaldúa continued: “In defining [...] the ‘lesbian’ identity from other aspects of identity I am asked to separate [...] all aspects from one another [...] But to put each in a separate compartment is to put them in contradiction [...] when in actuality they are all constantly in a shifting dialogue/relationship” (2009c: 167). This is one of the contributions Anzaldúa makes to queer theory: that sexuality is just a facet—together with race, religion, and so on—at the crossroads of being. Anzaldúa’s skill as a *nepantlera*, her ability to “shift from one world to another” (2002b: 5), led her to make other contributions to queer theory. Therein, having bridged the differences within ourselves, Anzaldúa went on to encourage us to bridge the differences between ourselves and the others. “To(o) Queer the Writer” ends with a vision of how future “new mestizas/os, bi- and multi-racial queer people who are mixed and politicized will raise up [together] and become important voices in our gay, ethnic, and other communities” (2009c: 174).

Regarding identity, Julia Kristeva has emphasized the pre-Oedipal qualities both of human development and poetry, which implies humans’ relational identities. In Jagose’s opinion, queer identity is “always ambiguous, always relational” (96). Therefore, poetry, queerness, and difference have in common the ability to put the self in relation with the others, be they from the above (e.g. spirituality), the middle (e.g. other people), or the below (e.g. the unconscious). In an earlier article, I put forward the idea that *Borderlands* implied a dialogical challenge to Western metaphysics. That is, the new *mestiza* way-of-living goes beyond the idea of identity based on the either/or hierarchy. I also argued that the new *mestiza*’s being-in-the-world is based on a dialogical both-and, which adds a third step to deconstruction (Núñez-Puente 2003). In another work, I theorized about a similar concept, which I called *identity-alterity* (Núñez-Puente 2006); I coined this compound, among other reasons, to address the dialogic interdependence between the other –e.g. another person, the body– and the self.

A modern view of difference, which comes from mathematics, is fuzzy logic. This view seems particularly useful when dealing with sets of different elements. Mark Currie thinks that the “advantage of the fuzzy set is that it [...] admits [...] the idea that no member of a set fulfills the criteria of membership by 100 per cent” (120). A very similar approach was theorized by Anzaldúa in her late writings; with reference to communities of people, she wrote: “Many of us identify with groups and social positions not limited to our ethnic, racial, religious, class, gender or national

classifications” (2002b: 3). In so doing, Anzaldúa accomplished two aims: first, to provide a description of queer similar to Sedgwick’s, by favoring self-definition over imposed definitions; second, to clear the path for people of different identities to identify with each other. Interestingly enough, Jagose agrees that queer’s “resistance to what it differs from is necessarily relational rather than oppositional” (98). Below I will come back to Anzaldúa’s queer relational approach and its parallelisms with dialogic, ecofeminist, affect and posthumanism theories.²

2. IDENTITY, DIFFERENCE, AND NEW TRIBALISM: FROM ECOLOGY TO POSTHUMANISM

Succinctly put, new tribalism refers to and promotes the ethnically diverse groups that coexist and work together with revolutionary democratic aims. A self that is open to being altered by the other –be it an emotion or another person– is a self with both poetic and queer qualities. Anzaldúa’s new tribalism is also present in her poetry, which can be put into dialogue with her prose, especially regarding her ecological concerns that work to open up a dialogue between humans and non-humans.

The etymology of new tribalism is similar to that of queer. As Anzaldúa explains: “In 1991, I [...] recycled the term ‘new tribalism’ from David Dieff who used to criticize me for [...] my ‘romantic vision’ of an ‘expanded identity’” (2009b: 283). That is, Anzaldúa turned an attack into a really positive and fruitful word. In her late writings, Anzaldúa gave us several definitions of new tribalism. In “(Un)Natural Bridges, (Un)Safe Spaces,” she described new tribalism as an epistemology to approach the “complex interplay among difference, sameness and similarities” among people (2002b: 3). In my reading of this, human beings can share similarities and still be different, and same does not mean “the same.” In philosophical texts of the past, confusing ideas such as difference, sameness, and similarity has resulted in a misunderstanding of the notion of identity. In “(Un)Natural,” Anzaldúa criticized that “the politics of exclusion based upon traditional categories [of identity] diminishes our humanness” (2002b: 2). She thus urged us to move from a traditional theorization of identity –e.g. unchangeable, self-centered, and individualistic– to a more realistic one –e.g. changeable, relational, and ethical.

In a late interview, Anzaldúa characterized new tribalism as “a kind of *mestizaje* that allows for connecting with other ethnic groups and interacting with other cultures and ideas” (2000b: 185). Reading this quotation, one realizes that the seed of Anzaldúa’s new tribalism might very well be in *Borderlands*. Halfway through the book, Anzaldúa urged us to move beyond an extreme, self-enclosed version of

Latino Studies: “The Latinoist [sic.] movement [...] is good but it is not enough [...] We need to meet on a broader communal ground” (1999: 109). At the beginning of her literary career, Anzaldúa called for an opening of the field of Latino Studies from a new tribalism perspective. Her opening of the field was possible thanks to a poetic queer vision of identity, which goes beyond race and ethnicity and comprehends the multiple sides of “identity-alterity” (Núñez-Puente 2006). Fourteen years later, Anzaldúa clarified new tribalism as a kind of “social identity that could motivate subordinated communities to work together in coalition” (2009b: 283). Therein, her philosophical move involved a political strategy, armed with poetic queer artillery, with which to overthrow hierarchical systems of domination.

The question that comes to mind is: can a new tribalism way-of-living subsume the notion of difference? In an e-mail dialogue, a hesitant Anzaldúa wrote: “Tengo miedo que, in pushing for a mestizaje and a new tribalism, I will detribalize [people]. Yet I also feel it’s imperative that we participate in the Dialogue no matter how risky” (2009b: 286). In order to delve into these issues, it is inevitable that we look at the state of multicultural studies. In general, past works on multiculturalism dealt with different cultural traditions separately, even in different sections or chapters. Hence, the comparison between cultures, and the ethics Anzaldúa is after, never takes place. As I am insisting upon, Anzaldúa puts forward a notion of difference that does not imply separation but, on the contrary, requires connection for its definition. Past studies on multiculturalism have often misread and reified difference as an identity, as an individual property belonging to a group. As we are seeing, Anzaldúa’s new tribalism implies an understanding of a queer non-identity, a self-in-relations. In addition, new tribalism attempts to define groups through what they share, which implies the dialogical outcome that difference actually is the result of ethics. From here we can argue that Anzaldúa was among the pioneers of the hemispheric and intercultural approaches which are still in vogue —e.g. Castellanos, Nájera, and Aldama.

Seeing society from a new tribalism perspective has revolutionary democratic results. In other words, new tribalism acknowledges the influences and similarities among apparently distinct cultures, while ending up with the supposed hierarchies between them. Against close-minded forms of multiculturalism, an assertive Anzaldúa wrote that the “Others can’t be lumped together, our issues collapsed our differences erased [...] We want our stories, our knowledge, our perspectives to be accepted and validated not only in universities but also in [other forums]” (2009a: 203-204). Trying to theorize what I have learnt from Anzaldúa, I would emphasize three issues to be taken into account in future theories and actions: first, comparison must stress and not

erase differences in the plural; second, difference in the singular is the prerequisite and the result of dialogue (and ethics); third, academic studies must recognize both the differences and the equal value among cultures (or peoples).

Going beyond sexual, racial, national, or continental interpretations, Anzaldúa re-theorized our interpretation of the world. Her new tribalism approach supposes “a more porous nationalism” (2000a: 215), which implies the acknowledgment that all of us are “nos/otras [...] [because] we’re each affected by the other [...] we’re all dependent on the other.” Consequently, new tribalism “questions what we’re doing to each other, to those in distant countries, and to the earth’s environment” (2002b: 2). Such a holistic perspective includes both a spiritual and ecological call for action. Anzaldúa’s commendable and ground-breaking “now let us shift” (2002a) is the best example to illustrate what I would call her ecofeminist turn. Anzaldúa’s “now let us shift” offers a blueprint for the kind of *conocimiento* (e.g. the knowledge of our-selves and others) we need to go through in order to connect and act collectively. Before delving into the seven stages of *conocimiento*, Anzaldúa named and summarized them as: *arrebato*, *nepantla*, *paralysis*, *action*, *rewriting*, *exposition*, and *spiritual activism*. Anzaldúa thus theorized about a “greater [form of] identity” which encompasses “spirit, feeling [...] body” and new tribalism (2002a: 560).

The path of *conocimiento* led Anzaldúa to comprehend that “Being Chicana [...] is no longer enough, being [...] *patlache* (queer) no longer suffices [...] [Resistance] calls you to retribalize your identity [...] reflecting an emerging planetary culture [...] In this narrative national boundaries dividing us from the “others” (nos/otras) are porous and the cracks between worlds serve as gateways” (2002a: 561). Anzaldúa had the poetic queer *facultad* both to find “cracks” —in “fence[s]” (1999: 24) and even “categories” (2009a: 205)— and to turn them into “gateways” out of a totalitarian world à la Cixous (1976). I will next remark briefly upon a couple of Anzaldúa’s poems, which ooze with Cixousian sorties leading to new tribalism, in a dialogical and ecological manner.

In “*Canción de la diosa de la noche*,” the lyrical voice is that of a dialogical poet who can communicate both with “Isis” (the above) and “Satan” (the below) (Anzaldúa 1999: 218-219). To achieve this multifold dialogue, she becomes a *naguala* or a female shape-shifter: first she blooms in the shape of “a vine / creeping down the moon” (218); then, she “pass[es] / through the gate, / come[s] to the path on the left”; and, finally, she becomes “the gate.” After inspiring us with her metamorphosis, the lyrical voice says “You are the gate” (220), by which she ultimately encourages all poetry readers to participate in the transformative ethical dialogues that connect the above-middle-

below. From here we can argue that, in order to have a dialogue, one needs to open the gate of identity. The verse “[we] charge our fate” (221) is especially intriguing; using the verb “charge,” which sounds similar to “change,” invites readers to celebrate the transformative and empowering energies of poetry. Neither with a positive nor a negative “charge” but with both, are both poetry writers and readers able to acquire the kind of *mestiza* “tolerance for ambiguity” (101). In all, a *mestiza* consciousness is also an ecological one, whose mediation between diverse entities –divine (Isis), vegetable (vine), satellite (moon), human (you), and material (gate)– is intended to achieve new tribalism.

It seems clear that Anzaldúa’s new tribalism goes beyond a critique of the “U.S./Mexican border” (1999: 25) to a critique which “takes into account the whole planet” (Anzaldúa 2002b: 3). In one of her latest writings, “now let us shift” (2002a), Anzaldúa included an untitled poem-prayer which rejoices with Nature. Therein, the poem-prayer invokes in bold letters the four cardinal points, besides the *centro* and underworld, together with the four elements of *fuego, agua, tierra*, and sky. Saying the poem-prayer involves performing a ritual in which the speaker must also “draw a circle in the sand [and]... stand at the center [...] to increase awareness of Spirit, recognize interrelatedness, and work for transformation” (2002a: 574). This circle functions as the Cixousian sortie through which the speaker can work to connect with other beings. Then s/he must address the Earth as: “Madre tierra [...] / forgive us for poisoning your lands, guide us to wiser ways of caring / for you. / May we possess the steadfastness of trees / the quiet serenity of dawn / the brilliance of a flashing star / the fluidity of fish in our element. / Earth, you who dream us, te damos las gracias” (2002a: 575). By speaking to the Earth, thanking Her, and acknowledging Her faculty to dream, Anzaldúa highlights the Earth’s subjectivity, something which many ethic philosophers would not be willing to admit (Bakhtin; Camps). Furthermore, the lyrical voice asks the Earth to help us to be more like Her; this way, we’ll learn new ways to care for Her and each other in the best ecological spirit. The poet thus invites us to enter into dialogue with so-called Nature, of which we are a part. With Anzaldúa I think that, first, we need to get rid of the human/non-human hierarchy; only then will we be able to carry out new tribalism.

A current of thought that cares about the human/non-human link is posthumanism, “which rejects dualism” (Braidotti 2), is “open to ideas of ‘paranormality,’ [...] and does not accept that [...] scientific methods [...] [are] superior to [...] other belief systems” (Pepperell 181). AnaLouise Keating underlines that Anzaldúa’s philosophy, especially her late work, puts Western theories in dialogue with personal

experience, esotericism, and indigenous wisdom (xxix). In *Light in the Dark*, Anzaldúa’s new tribalism way of thinking-feeling-living manifests in what she called the Coyolxauhqui imperative³. Drawing from the Aztec myth of Coyolxauhqui, Anzaldúa instills us in re-membling ourselves by healing our and others’ wounds in creative ways (2015: 95-116). Regarding identity, at least four teachings can be learnt from *Light in the Dark*: first, both the essentialist and the constructivist perspectives on identity formation are wrong; second, our identities are due partly to the people and (Nature) beings surrounding us; third, we also are who we are as a result of other issues which still are unknown to us (e.g. emotions, the unconscious, cosmic forces); fourth, humans have the duty to be creative and learn to know ourselves and others to help each other and live together in new tribalism, i.e. affective respect and solidarity. Due to her questioning of the individualistic concept of identity, her emphasis on the interrelationships between people as well as between these and other beings, and her belief in the supernatural place Anzaldúa among the posthumanist philosophers of today.

3. THE QUEERNESS OF SOLIDARITY: TOWARD QUEER AFFECTIVE ECO-DIALOGUES

So far, I have put forward the poetic, queer, dialogical, affective, ecofeminist, and posthumanist qualities of Anzaldúa’s (post-) *Borderlands* writings. Next, I will practice new tribalism, by putting Anzaldúa into dialogue with other feminists in what I call the queerness of solidarity. Therefore, this part is purposefully open and inconclusive; my hope is that the readers will also join what I call the eco-dialogue: the dialogical bridge which is our home –since the prefix “eco-” originally means “house, dwelling” (OED). In Anzaldúa’s words: “To bridge means loosening our borders, not closing off to others [...] To bridge is to attempt community” (2002b: 3).

Anzaldúa promotes the theory and practice of “inclusivity in terms of interrelationships and commonalities ... as complex interplay among sameness, difference, and similarities” (2009d: 239). My wish is to move Anzaldúa beyond the border of the “Latinoist” field (1999: 109), and to consider her as a universal Chicana. In so doing, I am obviously acknowledging her “identity-alterity” (Núñez-Puente 2006) in an Anzaldúan manner. On the one hand, Anzaldúa’s concrete universality is evident in her literature, with which so many people around the world feel identified. On the other, I believe that Anzaldúa’s late project involved opening up the intellectual-activist field to include white women, men, and many others in the dialogue —hence the overwhelming form and content of *This Bridge We Call Home* (Anzaldúa and Keating).

In this respect, Anzaldúa has points in common with dialogical feminists, who propose opening the dialogue to more and more speakers as “Hispanics, lesbians and gay men, African and Native Americans, and other marginalized peoples” (Hohne and Wussow xi). Given space limitations, I will only consider Anzaldúa in dialogue with a few world feminists whose works, like hers, exude dialogue, diversity, and affective relationships. Anzaldúa’s new tribalism teaches us that “our connectionist sense of spirit recognizes nurturance and reciprocity and encourages alliances among groups working to transform communities” (2002a: 568). Thus, I also expect that we move from an intercultural woman-to-woman dialogue to global solidarity.

Scheherazade, the heroine of *The Thousand and One Nights*, is famous for her skills at dialogue. According to Moroccan Fatema Mernissi: “Scheherazade teaches that a woman can effectively rebel by developing [dialogue] [...] that there is a need to confront the different other, and to insist on the [...] respect of boundaries if Dialogue is to be achieved” (52). I agree with Mernissi that dialogue is a woman’s ideal weapon against tyranny and that, in order to have dialogues, one needs to respect the boundary between the self and the other. From my point of view, this boundary can actually be the very discourse which both joins and separates the participants. However, Mernissi uses the expression “confront the different other” which has an oppositional tone. This leads me to a set of questions around identity and difference that haunt my mind. Do human beings, women in this case, have anything in common? Are we scared of sharing characteristics with people from cultures we do not feel attracted to? Could the state-controlled parceled-up promotion of difference and minorities ultimately benefit those in power? Contrary to other theories about difference, Anzaldúa’s “both-andism” (Núñez-Puente 2006) equally cherishes differences and similarities. Most importantly, besides confronting the others, Anzaldúa is interested in making connections with them. After a time of emphasis on difference and separateness, contemporary scholars and activists world-wide are insisting on both the need to search for people’s commonalities, and to join forces and work together against any kind of tyranny. The project of ecofeminists, which goes beyond the boundaries of a short-range feminism to “struggle for the preservation of [...] this planet” (Mies and Shiva 16), leads them to also foster connections.

Vandana Shiva is an Indian physicist working on ecology; Maria Mies is a German sociologist trained in feminism. The fact that both women work and write together, *Ecofeminism* (1993), is evidence of people’s ability for border crossing and solidarity. From her first co-edited anthology, *This Bridge Called my Back* (Moraga and Anzaldúa), Anzaldúa proved she was keen on working in coalition, either at activist

organizing or writing with other authors. Kenyan Wangari Maathai insisted too that we have to “focus on what brings us together, which will allow us to cooperate and respect one another” (250). Mies and Shiva urged us further to see a “common ground [...] which recognizes that life in nature ... is maintained by means of co-operation [...] [in order] to respect and preserve the diversity of all life forms” (5-6). However, in case not all people care for the continuity of the planet, how can we figure out what we have in common? The most immediate answer is by means of dialogue; and the only a priori commonality we must share is the will to have a dialogue. Hence, Egyptian Nawal El Saadawi encourages us to have dialogues in order to “discover and reinforce what is common to us all—our basic humanity and longing for justice, democracy and peace despite differences of nationality, class, race, colour, ethnicity, gender[,] religion ... We need to believe in our creativity” (67).

As previously said, Anzaldúa had the poetic queer faith that creative work can transform the world. In the last essay published in her lifetime, “Let Us Be the Healing of the Wound,” she wrote “we can transform the world by imagining it differently” (2005: 101). Anzaldúa continued: “Nepantleras such as *artistas/activistas* help us [...] through the transformation process [...] I call *conocimiento*” (2005: 99). Therein, the *conocimiento* demanded by Anzaldúa is what can let us discover what we have in common. Nonetheless, the first step is to dialogue with our-selves so that we can get rid of our *desconocimientos*; only then can we embark on discovering what we share with others and work on long-range political activism with them. The combination between self-knowledge and political activism is what Anzaldúa called “spiritual activism” (100). The second step involves changing both our language and attitude. With respect to language, Anzaldúa’s use of several varieties of Spanish and English could be termed ecological, given her aim to both defend and connect the elements of cultural diversity. Furthermore, Anzaldúa worked to simplify and therefore make accessible the language of theory that “does not translate well when one’s intention is to communicate to masses of people made up of different audiences” (1990: xxvi).

It must be added that one of the most vital characteristic of dialogue is listening. We need to be willing to listen with an open mind so as to, if necessary, change our point of view. In “Let Us be the Healing,” Anzaldúa is clear about the *desconocimientos* the U.S. suffers from: “racism, propensity for violence, rapacity for consuming, neglect of its responsibility for global communities and the environment, and unjust treatment of dissenters and the disenfranchised, especially people of color” (2005: 93). Listening to this accusation must be hard for some people. However, we need to listen to it while thinking that the speaker could be right; the question now is: how can we change our

attitude if we are not willing to listen in an ethical manner? Argentinian-American María Lugones believes that in “the relation between women of color in the U.S. and White/Anglo women: there is a failure of love” (6). African-American Audrie Lorde has proposed the erotic as a source of power “that can provide energy for change” (53), encouraging women to practice eroticism “in the face of a racist, patriarchal, and anti-erotic society” (59). Lugones similarly invites different “worlds” to “travel” into each other since “[k]nowing other women’s ‘worlds’ is part of knowing them and knowing them is part of loving them” (12). I also see dialogue as an affective form of travelling so as to learn from and teach the other (Núñez-Puente 2016).

Drawing inspiration from Italian feminists, Israeli-British Nira Yuval-Davis suggests joining affect and travelling/imagination when having dialogues, by combining the strategies of “rooting” and “shifting.” If rooting has to do with the speaker’s situatedness, shifting is acquired by listening to the other in an empathetic and imaginative manner. Both Anzaldúa’s life and written work are filled with different manifestations of rooting and shifting. More concretely, her essay “now let us shift” inspires us to develop our nepantlera faculty, which “allows us to picture [...] similarities instead of solid divisions” (2002: 568). In an Anzaldúan vein, I would like to propose a play-on-words where “divisions” becomes “the visions” in which different people contribute to a dialogue. Thanks to our nepantlera faculty: “Where we saw only separateness, differences, and polarities, our connectionist sense of spirit recognizes nurturance and reciprocity and encourages alliances among groups working to transform communities” (Anzaldúa 2002a: 568). Finally, this kind of coalition building rests upon an amalgam of wisdom consisting of Anzaldúa’s new *mestiza*, *El Mundo Zurdo*, new tribalism, and spiritual activism.

Anzaldúa’s oeuvre, from *Borderlands* to *Light in the Dark*, articulates new ways of coexisting, which cherish both commonalities and differences, and thus go beyond forms of assimilationism and separatism. These new ways of coexisting involve building affective coalitions of queer, ecological, spiritual, and therefore posthumanist action in order to practice ethical relationships and cause social change as a planetary culture. Hence, I would like to summon the readers of this special number to jump into Anzaldúa’s third step: the adventure of dialogue —because *la unión dialógica hace la fuerza*. To start our journey, get rid of our *desconocimientos*, and change both our language and attitude, I would like to finish (though not conclude) by listening to Anzaldúa’s poetic queer voice: “Let us link hands and hearts / [...] / step through the doorways between worlds / [...] / build bridges, cross them with grace, and claim these puentes our / ‘home’ / [...] / Now let us shift” (2002a: 576).

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NOTES

¹ *Queeremos* is a play-on-words between Spanish "queremos" ("we love") and English "to queer." I owe this neologism to Suárez Briones.

² I must provide, at least, an outline of the theories employed in my research. Dialogics employs dialogue as a form of ethics; for feminist dialogics, providing women and other colonized peoples with the status of speaking subjects conveys the transformation of society into a truly democratic one. Ecofeminism was born from the link between feminism and ecology; it currently works for social justice and the sustainability of the planet. Affect theory mainly examines the epistemology of emotions, and discusses how paralinguistic realms enter into dialogue with human senses and relationships. Posthumanism questions old definitions of “human,” while caring about the human/non-human continuum and the bonds between humans.

³ *Light in the Dark* is Anzaldúa’s posthumous book. Although it includes some new material, most of the essays had been published earlier and are discussed throughout this article.

Pensamiento y práctica transfronterizos

ROMANA RADLWIMMER

RESUMEN

Treinta años después, la teoría de Anzaldúa sigue moviendo a las comunidades artísticas, políticas y académicas. Desde mi propia práctica de leer *Borderlands* y de volver a leerlo, y observando el impacto en tantos ámbitos discursivos, creo hoy que la fuerza impactante y el éxito inmediato y duradero del texto está en su calidad de tocar, de perturbar, despertar y conmover. En este ensayo discuto cómo el pensamiento sobre fronteras de Anzaldúa se ha modificado desde sus primeras publicaciones en los años 1980 hasta sus últimos textos escritos ya en el nuevo milenio y antes de que falleciera en el 2004. También indago en las prácticas que interpretan la teoría de Anzaldúa a su manera, y que retroalimentan el pensamiento transfronterizo en diversos medios y formatos. Entre las artistas chicanas que tratan la frontera de forma concreta y metafórica, se encuentran la cineasta Lourdes Portillo y la escritora Norma Cantú; dos artistas latinas que conciben la frontera materialmente y simbólicamente son la cantante Lourdes Pérez y la pintora Liliana Wilson.

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