The Curandera of Conquest
Gloria Anzaldúa's Decolonial Remedy

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Abstract: *In this essay I argue that the primary role that Gloria Anzaldúa creates for herself as a writer and activist is that of the curandera of conquest, the healer of* la herida abierta *(the open wound) created by the borders imposed by capitalism, nationalism, imperialism, sexism, homophobia, and racism. After examining Anzaldúa's* Prietita and the Ghost Woman *as both an illustration (in content) and an example (in enactment) of her practice as a curandera, I provide a brief overview of curanderismo and key developments in the theories of decolonization within global indigenous studies since the turn of the twenty-first century. I read Anzaldúa's decolonizing work as a companion to this recent decolonization move within indigenous theory and practice.*

In a 1991 interview concerning the Quincentennial celebrations, Gloria Anzaldúa defines her project of "spiritual activism" as a decolonizing countermovement to Euro-American glorifications of both conquests, the Spanish and the Anglo (2000, 177–94). She anchors her rejection of colonialism in what she calls the "New Tribalism," grounded in her attention to the indigenous roots of *mestizaje*. Noting that the Conquest was enacted through writing (letters between Columbus and Isabella, chronicles written by the clergy, and, we could add, treaties between the U.S. government and hand-chosen tribal "representatives"), she argues for "reclaiming the agency of reinscribing, taking off their inscriptions and reinscribing ourselves" (189) as a step toward healing of the Earth (193). In this example we see Anzaldúa's self-definition as a *curandera* of conquest, a healer of *la herida abierta*, the open wound created by the borders that neocolonialism has imposed—borders policing class, national, gender, sexual, racial, and religious divisions. Anzaldúa's healing work in defining mestiza consciousness functions as a necessary precondition for liberation from below and

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as the embodiment of a concrete, historically embedded alternative to the colonizing Eurocentric rationality of modernity.[1]

Such healing work involves a diagnosis and a remedy. Anzaldúa situates her diagnosis within her chronicling of Anglo terrorism in the Southwest. The social forces of oppression that she identifies produce the illness: internalized colonialism. Having internalized the perspective of the colonizers, one sees oneself through the colonizers' eyes and in terms of the colonizers' values and, then, is *rajada*: sliced right down the middle by the inner conflict resulting from such internalization. This slice or cut—what Anzaldúa (1987, 67) refers to as *la rajadura*—manifests as the individual incorporation of the herida abierta of the border. The Chicana's process of recognizing and purging herself of this internalized alien and constantly self-damning perspective and replacing it with a positive, re-indigenized self-orientation is the primary act of decolonizing that Anzaldúa's writings make possible. In this way she provides the remedy for the root cause of the many symptoms of colonized selfhood.

I clarify my claim that Anzaldúa is the curandera of conquest first by examining her book *Prietita and the Ghost Woman* (2001). Next, I lay out the key elements of *curanderismo*. I provide a brief overview of key developments in the theories of decolonization within global indigenous studies since the turn of the twenty-first century, looking specifically at the work of Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith and that of two native North American activist-theoreticians, Waziyatawin Angela Wilson and Taiaiake Alfred. Finally, I show how Anzaldúa's decolonizing work is already operating in terms similar to this recent decolonization move within indigenous theory and practice. As a gesture toward a kind of pan-tribal solidarity, I want to suggest a cross-reading of Anzaldúa within the terms of indigenous decolonization—and the reverse. Such a move might function as a bridge between global movements of indigenous decolonization and Anzaldúa's militant Chicana critique of Spanish and Anglo colonialisms, which in turn raises important issues for cross-border indigenism and for peoples who have been detribalized through ethnic cleansing of various sorts.[2]

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Decolonization and the Curandera's Apprentice

We see a prime example of the workings of decolonization in one of Anzaldúa's children's stories. Prietita, a dark-complexioned young girl, is apprenticed to a curandera. Prietita's name is slang for "little dark girl," meaning that she appears more indigenous than other Chicanas (Anzaldúa 1983). Anzaldúa shows in this *cuento* (story) that the turn to curanderismo itself is a decolonizing act, *and* that decolonization, by healing the wounds of conquest, is a form of curanderismo.

A curandera is a female traditional Mexican or Chicana healer or medicine woman who makes use of ancient rituals and (primarily herbal) remedies known as *remedios*.[3] In this way, she draws on a body of knowledge that has been suppressed by the colonizing forces. A Christianized synthesis of indigenous healing practices from Arab Africa, Europe, and the Americas, curanderismo made possible a mode of practical consciousness that offered indigenous peoples (including mestizos) a concrete yet discreet means of resisting the colonizing impact of the Spanish Conquest and with it the initial moment of modernity-coloniality. The second conquest, the later moment of modernity promulgated by U.S. imperialism, inflicted yet another colonial practice of wounding in its continuous expansion of military and economic aggression under the Monroe Doctrine. In her development of what she refers to in *Borderlands/La Frontera* as the new mestiza consciousness, Anzaldúa herself becomes the decolonizing curandera of conquest.

In *Prietita and the Ghost Woman* (2001), Anzaldúa picks up on her earlier self-identification as la Prieta, the dark girl with Indian features.[4] As the story opens, Prietita is working in the garden of a curandera when she learns that her mother is suffering from a recurring sickness. Knowing that Doña Lola, the curandera, "can cure almost any sickness" and knows "almost every healing plant" in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas, Prietita asks her for a remedio, or remedy. But Doña Lola informs Prietita that she has run out of *ruda*, a crucial ingredient in the cure. She sends Prietita on a quest for the missing plant, which can only be found in a dangerous place—the King Ranch, whose occupants are famous for shooting trespassers. The actual trespassers, the Euro-American invaders who conquered South Texas and established such colonial enterprises as the King Ranch, have turned the tables and are now defending "their" territory from others.[5]

Doña Lola provides Prietita, then, with the crucial experience that teaches her that her own development as a curandera requires fearless confrontation with colonialist violence. The story thus becomes an

illustration of the educating function of the curandera, of the necessary transmission of sacred knowledge from one generation to the next if there is to be health and cultural survival. Conveying this message in a bilingual children's book is itself a way of synthesizing medium and message—it is a story about cultural transmission told by means of a genre devoted to (usually monolingual) cultural transmission. Rather than passing on the standard colonialist revisions of history as taught in mainstream children's literature and the educational system, Anzaldúa appropriates the medium for her decolonizing mission.

In this story Anzaldúa brings together several of the critical motifs of her *Borderlands* (1987). Probably most important is the insistence on the need to reclaim the cultural embodiments of indigenous womanhood that have been demonized by Christianity and Western rationalism. A prominent example in *Borderlands* is Anzaldúa's reconstruction of Coatlicue, the monstrous earth-mother deity of the Aztecs (Aigner-Varoz 2000, 56–57; Alarcón 1989; Bost 2005; Lara 2008). In the masculinist cosmology of the Aztecs, Coatlicue (Earth) and her daughter Coyolxauhqui (Moon) are eclipsed and dismembered by Coatlicue's son Huitzilopochtli (Sun/War). By contrast, in Anzaldúa's reconstructed cosmology, which involves returning to the matriarchal roots of Amerindian symbolism, the female principle embodied by Coatlicue and Coyolxauhqui is returned to its rightful place at the center of social consciousness.[6] Monstrosity and dismemberment here pave the way for insight into the nature of the soul and the healing of the social wound—la herida abierta. Anzaldúa carries out the same revisionary project in the story of the curandera's apprentice.

For Prietita, even though she is unaware of this throughout most of the story, the figure in need of reclamation and transfiguration is La Llorona, the infamous weeping woman of Mexican culture. Elsewhere Anzaldúa explains La Llorona's origins: "La Llorona is a ghost woman with long black hair and dressed in white who appears at night, sometimes near bodies of water, sometimes at crossroads, calling with loud and terrifying wails for her lost children. She has her origins in various prehispanic deities: Cihuacóatl, Xtabai, Xonaxi Queculla, and Auicanime" (2000, 576, n.8). Having lost her own children tragically, La Llorona is often said to roam in search of other wayward children to drown in lakes, rivers, *acequias*, and other bodies of water (Arrizón 2000; Carbonell 1999; Garber 2001, 152–54). As part of the transborder Mexican cultural practice of denigrating female figures, the demonization of La Llorona reinforces the perception of the power of women as frightening and seemingly destructive. This is especially true of

curanderas and *brujas*, who are often cast as evil and seductive witches—an expression of Christian intolerance of heterodoxy and otherness. It is in this spirit, for example, that Irene Lara writes of taking on "bruja positionalities"—of reappropriating the power of such demonized female figures—as part of a "project concerned with decolonizing the sacred from oppressive Christian and western worldviews that perpetuate desconocimientos that negatively impact women's lives" (2005, 12).

Prietita's quest involves many dangers and leaps of faith. The first challenge, mentioned above, is entering the forbidden King Ranch. Finding no ruda plants outside the perimeter of the ranch, Prietita realizes that she must sneak under the barbwire. She finds herself walking deeper and deeper into the woods. Hearing the sound of a woman crying, she is confronted by a danger that she has learned to fear as much as, if not more than, gringos with guns—La Llorona. Prietita responds as she has been raised to do: "She remembered her grandmother's stories of la Llorona—the ghost woman [*la mujer fantasma*] dressed in white. Her grandmother said that la Llorona appeared at night by rivers or lagoons, crying for her lost children and looking for other children to steal." In Prietita's response we see the internalization of colonization in action and the ideological reverse of the generational transmission that Anzaldúa seeks. Prietita's grandmother has bought into the lie of patriarchy that claims that La Llorona is an evil force to be feared and avoided.

As part of her development, Prietita must trust her intuition that the animals she meets are not simply animals but helpers in her quest. It is possible, moreover, that each animal is a *nagual* for La Llorona, an animal form that she assumes. Shape shifting is a notion common throughout indigenous cultures in the Americas.[7] The animals that Prietita meets—the white-tail deer (*venadita*), the salamander, the dove, the jaguar, and the lightning bugs—have sacred significance to Mesoamerican peoples, who regard many of them as naguals. Whether we are to see them as manifestations of La Llorona or simply as animal guides that lead Prietita to her, the key here is that Prietita instinctively trusts them, speaks to them, and follows their lead through the forest. The animals bring her to La Llorona, who floats above the waters of a lagoon. When Prietita arrives, La Llorona's behavior is just the opposite of what the legends attribute to her. Instead of stealing and murdering Prietita, she shows her where to find the ruda and then leads her back to the barbwire boundary of the King Ranch. La Llorona leads Prietita, in other words, on the path of the curandera and thereby contributes to two forms of healing: healing Prietita's mother with

the ruda (the standard act of the curandera) and healing the cultural status of women by negating the negative representation usually attributed to the La Llorona figure (the larger transformative social act of the curandera).

Prietita's family is waiting for her outside the barbwire fence. Telling them of her success, she says, "A ghost woman in white was my guide." Her cousin Teté responds with the typical colonized reaction to any reference to La Llorona: "But everyone knows she takes children away. She doesn't bring them back." Doña Lola knows better, however, explaining that "perhaps she is not what others think she is." In the same vein Anzaldúa writes, "Behind, the world admonishes you to stick to the old-and-tried dominant paradigm, the secure relationships within it. Adelante, la Llorona whispers, 'You have a task, a calling, only you can bring forth your potential.' You yearn to know what that ever-present inner watcher is asking of you" (2002, 556).

Doña Lola has provided Prietita with access to the decolonizing power of the curandera, the power to heal the open wound of the colonial border by reclaiming the healing and guiding power of indigenous women. This takes place through the reappropriation of figures such as La Llorona, Malinche (the indigenous princess who led Cortés to Moctezuma), Coatlicue (the monstrous Toltec earth mother), and Coyolxauhqui (Coatlicue's daughter, the moon goddess who was murdered by her brother Huitzilopochtli, the sun-war god). Each local, individual healing act of the curandera is a moment of participating in the larger healing process of decolonization. And Anzaldúa's own act of telling Prietita's story is at once an example of and an exposition on the political power of reclaiming the curandera as the curandera reclaims La Llorona. In her remarks on countering five hundred years of colonialism, Anzaldúa says, "I've recuperated la Llorona to trace how we go from victimhood to active resistance, from the wailing of suffering and grief to the grito of resistance, and on to the grito of celebration and joy" (2000, 180). Anzaldúa herself is the curandera when she engages in the process of telling this story, and in the process, she continues the transmission of healing knowledge in the face of colonial forgetting and erasure.

Curanderismo

Prietita is, of course, a figure for Anzaldúa's own initiation into a decolonial curanderismo. When I call Anzaldúa the curandera of conquest, this is no metaphor. I am not suggesting that Anzaldúa's project is to conquest and colonialism what the curandera's is to sickness, curses, and other maladies

that fall under the healer's purview. I mean that Anzaldúa's decolonial project is in fact a form of curanderismo, that she consciously applies the concepts and practices of the curandera to the social ills of colonialism that she hopes to help heal. These are concepts and practices that she hopes to pass on to others who would take on (apprentice themselves to) such a project. An overview of traditional concepts and practices of curanderismo will provide us with a key to understanding Anzaldúa's references to these concepts and practices and how they operate within her decolonial mode of curanderismo.

Curanderismo is a healing practice with origins in Arab (via Spain), African (via diasporic slaves), Greek, Spanish, and Amerindian cultures. Despite being superficially transformed by the "civilized" monotheistic traditions of Islam and Christianity, the practices and belief systems of curanderismo stem primarily from polytheistic tribal-indigenous sources. Curanderas often use Christianized elements, but these elements themselves are primarily pre-Christian and are given a Christian veneer through various syncretistic influences. These elements are in substance no different from those of Aztec or Maya healing practices. Furthermore, elements that clearly derive from Europe are themselves carryovers from pre-Christian indigenous European practices, again despite having been clothed in Christian trappings. Even as late as the Spanish Inquisition, which was concurrent with the Conquest of the Americas, pre-Christian "folk" beliefs and practices persisted—as seen in the attempts to eradicate witchcraft. The characterization in the Americas of the bruja as a witch who practices black magic was shaped in part by the Inquisition (although there are indigenous roots here as well).

When I speak of curanderismo and Anzaldúa's adoption of it as indigenous, then, I am referring in part to its roots in global indigenous cultures; but I am at the same time speaking of current-day indigenous practices that have survived in spite of hundreds of years of attempts to squash them. While never overtly saying so—although she does point to others who have (2000, 19)—Anzaldúa frames herself in her poetic-spiritual-activist practice as a curandera as she engages in Aztec and other Mesoamerican practices and their survival in so-called folk culture.[8] For what is spoken of as Mexican folk culture is often a composite of various detribalized indigenous elements, detribalized in the sense that the tribal roots of many Mexicans, especially in the north in places such as Texas, have been forgotten or suppressed. In *The Last Generation*, Cherríe Moraga argues that the majority of Chicanos have been

> denied direct information regarding our tribal affiliations. Since our origins are usually in the southwest and México, Chicanos' Indian roots encompass a range of nations including Apache, Yaqui, Papago, Navajo, and Tarahumara from the border regions, as well as dozens of Native tribes throughout México. Regardless of verifiable genealogy, many Chicanos have recently begun to experience a kind of collective longing to return to our culture's traditional Indigenous beliefs and ways of constructing community in order to find concrete solutions for the myriad problems confronting us, from the toxic dump sites in our neighborhoods to rape. (1999, 166)

Anzaldúa's decolonizing project seeks to remember these tribal roots and to highlight their continuing existence today, as Guillermo Bonfil Batalla argues in his study of indigenous Mexico (1996). This act flies in the face of both the Spanish and Anglo-American conquests of tribal cultures in North America and the attempts by both the Mexican and the U.S. national projects to relegate indigenous cultures to museums and murals as safe relics of the past. Anzaldúa was quite conscious, even so, of the resistances such an indigenous identification might cause. In an interview, she discussed the ways in which both Chicanas and Native women challenged this move. Hating the Indian in themselves, some Raza display the mechanisms of internalized colonialism as they treat "las indias" as other: "Nosotras gets divided into nos/otras, into an us/them division. The us/them dichotomy locks us into a who-is-more-oppressed dynamic. Internalized racism and internalized shame get played out" (2004, 10). She also points to the tendency among some Native women to see Chicanas as appropriationists who continue "the abuse of native spirituality and the Internet appropriation of Indian symbols, rituals, vision quests, and spiritual healing practices like shamanism. Some natives put Chicanas/os on the side of the dominators and claim our fantasies are similar to those of 'whites.'"[9] This rift—interestingly described as the "open herida"—becomes further complicated as different groups are pitted against one another for resources in academic institutions, aggravating the "wounds of genocidal colonization and marginalization that have never formed scabs because they've continued to bleed for centuries."

When Anzaldúa describes the open wound of the border in specific terms, as specific types of ailments, she draws directly from curanderismo. Elena Avila, to whom Anzaldúa refers in later work (2002, 580), writes that curanderismo recognizes three categories of diseases: physical, emotional, and spiritual. The primary physical diseases that curanderas treat are (a) *bilis*, bile or rage, from Greek humoral theory, as seen in someone

who would be characterized as a rage-aholic; (b) *empacho*, a blockage of the stomach or digestive tract, requiring massage-like treatment, or any kind of blockage of the body's physical or emotional energies (of the heart or the soul); and (c) *mal aire*, bad air, which manifests in cold symptoms, earaches, and sometimes facial paralysis, all from exposure to night air. Avila explains that Mesoamerican tribes were "aware that diseases were caused by airborne bacteria," even though they called these tiny organisms "spirits" (1999, 47–48). The physical ailments that Anzaldúa deals with are primarily empacho (see below in relation to Coatlicue) and mal aire or *mal aigre* (see my discussion of *susto* below). The physical, emotional, and spiritual are intricately interconnected for her.

The emotional diseases include: (a) *envidia*, envy; (b) *mal puesto*, a hex or curse; (c) *mal de ojo*, illness caused by staring (with an *ojo de venado*, an object resembling the eye of a deer, often prescribed as remedy); and finally, (d) *mala suerte*, bad luck, which Avila suggests we experience when life does not match our expectations, leading to low self-esteem, worry, and helplessness (1999, 61). Anzaldúa rarely makes specific reference to these ailments, but I would argue that internalized colonization, which she emphasizes, is a form of mal de ojo in that it involves the debilitating effects of being seen as the other in colonial society. In "Metaphors in the Tradition of the Shaman," Anzaldúa suggests the cure for this colonizing mal de ojo, which inheres in the very metaphors by which we make sense of our world, involves replacing the internalized disempowering metaphors with empowering ones:

> La curación—"the cure"—may consist of removing something (disindoctrination)—of extracting the old dead metaphors. Or it may consist of adding what is lacking—restoring the balance and strengthening the physical, mental, and emotional states of the person. . . . In *Borderlands/La frontera*, I articulate the debilitating states that women and the colonized go through and the resulting disempowerment. . . . [The disempowering metaphor] will endure until we replace it with a new metaphor, one that we believe in both consciously and unconsciously. (1990, 99–100)

Noting that envidia, or envy, is often the emotion behind mal de ojo, Anzaldúa argues that such is the expected outcome of a people whose values promote communal harmony over individual glory. While such values are often necessary for the group's survival, they tend to harden into demands for conformity and humility. People who appear to emphasize the self over the group, then, lay themselves open for envy and its destructive results. When a culture establishes and polices hierarchical orders, anyone

seeking minority recognition is defined as deviant and insubordinate. "The Chicano, mexicano, and some Indian cultures have no tolerance for deviance," Anzaldúa writes, relating homophobia to such communal intolerance. "The queer are the mirror reflecting the heterosexual tribe's fear: being different, being other and therefore lesser, therefore subhuman, in-human, non-human" (1987, 40).

Anzaldúa refers to the spiritual diseases frequently in her work. The two primary types that curanderas work with are (a) *susto*, or soul loss, which we suffer if we experience a frightening or traumatic event intense enough to cause our soul to temporarily leave our body (Avila 1999, 64); and (b) *espanto*, the susto (fright) caused by seeing a ghost, not honoring the dead, or leaving unfinished business. Anzaldúa explains that because indigenous peoples of the Americas believe in the physicality of the soul, they then believe that the soul (which contains many layers or manifestations) can be affected by external forces (2002, 577, n.12). Susto is a fright that results in the loss of the soul. "The afflicted one is allowed to rest and recuperate, to withdraw into the 'underworld' without drawing condemnation" (1987, 70). But in a world dominated by Western notions of science and medicine (a West that had vanquished its own indigenous systems such as the medieval "folk" medicine brought over by the Conquistadors), Anzaldúa was not supposed to give credence to the indigenous beliefs underlying curanderismo. "So I grew up in the interface," she tells us, "trying not to give countenance to el mal aigre, evil non-human, non-corporeal entities riding the wind, that could come in through the window, through my nose with my breath. I was not supposed to believe in susto, a sudden shock or fall that frightens the soul out of the body" (1987, 60). Living at the intersection of indigenous and European spiritual-medicinal belief systems resulted in yet another form of la herida abierta of mestizaje. Ironically, then, this colonial attempt to squash curanderismo itself gave rise to a new need for a cure.

Just as there are many different diseases treated by curanderas, Avila explains there are also various different specialists in curanderismo (1999, 69–86). They include (a) *hierbero*, or herbalist; (b) *sobadora*, or masseuse, with a healing touch; (c) *partera*, the midwife who gives a child a deep sense of place and belonging; (d) *consejera*, or counselor, who uses *pláticas* (heart-to-heart talks) to allow the victim to *desahogar* (let off steam, vent); (e) *espiritualista*, the trance medium who channels spirits; (f) *huesero*, akin to a chiropractor; and (g) *curandera total*, who employs all four levels of medicine that Avila identifies—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. In her discussions of indigenist-mestiza practice and in her own practice as

described in her major writings, Anzaldúa deals with issues related to each of these roles except for (to my knowledge) the sobadora and the huesero. Her mestiza consciousness project works specifically with the problems of empacho, susto, and espanto. The Coatlicue state, for example—the primary condition responsible for the development of mestiza consciousness—begins with empacho: "Blocks (*Coatlicue* states) are related to my cultural identity. The painful periods of confusion that I suffer from are symptomatic of a larger creative process: cultural shifts. The stress of living with cultural ambiguity both compels me to write and blocks me" (1987, 96).

In the process, the mestiza writer is ejected "as nahual, an agent of transformation, able to modify and shape primordial energy and therefore able to change herself and others into turkey, coyote, tree, or human" (1987, 96–97). It is exactly this process of empowering transformation that Anzaldúa attributes to La Llorona in *Prietita and the Ghost Woman*. Elsewhere she specifically refers to this process as a *limpia*, a cleansing ritual carried out by the curandera (2002, 554).

The actual formal practice of curanderismo takes place in just such ceremonies and the making, prescribing, and sometimes administering of remedios. The primary ceremonies include limpias, pláticas, and soul recovery. Limpias, or ceremonial cleansings, often use sacred smoke from copal or sage as a cleansing medium. The burning of the resin copal—from the Nahuatl word *copalli*, meaning incense—is known in other contexts as smudging. Anzaldúa describes performing such cleansing ceremonies throughout her work, such as during her observance of *el día de la Chicana y el Chicano*: "On that day I clean my altars, light my Coatlalopeuh candle, burn sage and copal, take *el baño para espantar basura* [a bath for scaring away trash], sweep my house" (1987, 110). Or her description of the writing process as sacred ritual for the nahual mestiza writer: "I sit here before my computer, *Amiguita*, my altar on top of the monitor with the *Virgen de Coatlalopeuh* candle and copal incense burning. My companion, a wooden serpent staff with feathers, is to my right while I ponder the ways metaphor and symbol concretize the spirit and etherealize the body" (97). In this computer/altar assemblage Anzaldúa creates a site for the concretizing/etherealizing practice of "mestiza" consciousness in one of her most profound interventions: the transformative combination of her curandera's altar (the techno-site for concretizing the spirit) and her computer monitor (the techno-site for etherializing the body). This metaphoric complex undermines Western linear temporality and its ideology of progress that normally polices the distinction between computer and altar

by manifesting the contemporaneity and compatibility of indigenous and Western practices—a Quetzalcoátlan fusing of "opposites" already embodied by her feathered serpent staff. In this way, Anzaldúa fuses what Western logic perceives as the premodern and the postmodern when she refuses to privilege the narcissistic self-importance of the modern itself.

Anzaldúa's use of the plática ritual, the heart-to-heart talks with the sufferer, is a crucial element of her decolonizing work. The typical purpose of the plática is to plumb the depths of the sufferer's soul or psyche in order to unearth the causes of the person's malaise. Then the curandera provides healthy direction and encouragement. In Anzaldúa's work this exchange is part of her social analysis of the forces/sources of oppression on a larger sociohistorical scale, namely the impact of colonialism on those who are marked by the marking of the border. In this sense, her whole system could be seen as a mode of plática performance; yet this mode shows up in much more specific instances throughout her work, informing, for example, the whole second-person mode of address of "Now let us shift . . ." In that essay, Anzaldúa is engaged in a plática with herself—but herself as the representative of the whole class of border victims falling under her term "Mestiza," as she says in *Borderlands*: "I am playing with my Self, I am playing with the world's soul, I am the dialogue between my Self and *el espíritu del mundo*. I change myself, I change the world" (1987, 92).

The curandera's practice of soul retrieval is probably the most significant and all-encompassing of Anzaldúa's own healing practices in relation to the communally experienced susto of conquest. The Coatlicue state, in its shamanic and poetic modes, is just such a process of soul retrieval. Anzaldúa refers to this process as "making face," which she calls "a Nahuatl concept" (2002, 95), or making soul (1987, 68; 1995), a post-Jungian concept developed by James Hillman (1977). She explains the relationships between these concepts as follows:

> We need *Coatlicue* to slow us up so that the psyche can assimilate previous experiences and process the changes. If we don't take the time, she'll lay us low with an illness, forcing us to "rest." Come, little green snake. Let the wound caused by the serpent be cured by the serpent. The soul uses everything to further its own making. Those activities or *Coatlicue* states which disrupt the smooth flow (complacency) of life are exactly what propel the soul to do its work: make soul, increase consciousness of itself. Our greatest disappointments and painful experiences—if we can make meaning out of them—can lead us toward becoming more of who we are. Or they can remain meaningless. The *Coatlicue* state can be a way station or it can be a way of life. (1987, 68)

Here Anzaldúa, in concise form, presents a decolonizing theory of trauma. While this scenario applies to ways of dealing with any illness, the primary illness that concerns Anzaldúa, again, is the open wound of the creation and colonization of border regions.[10] Illness functions here as a symptom rather than as the main condition to be addressed. This is so because "local" illnesses, so to speak, are symptomatic manifestations of the larger illness of colonialism. The traumatic experiences of the changes wrought by colonization are what need to be acknowledged and processed in order, in the language of curanderismo, for the soul to be retrieved or, in the language of psychoanalysis, for the traumatized psyche to be reintegrated and resymbolized. When we ignore these signs and attempt to push through trauma in order to get on with our lives, as if nothing had ever happened, we need "*Coatlicue* to slow us up," forcing us to rest in order to confront the need for the painful process of psychic reintegration—painful because it requires intense self-scrutiny (soul searching) into the ways we have internalized the colonizing forces behind the trauma.

The Coatlicue state, in other words, descends on us like an illness. We can either accommodate ourselves to this illness (make it "a way of life") or we can take it as a sign for the need for soul work (make it "a way station"). So what remedy does Anzaldúa the curandera prescribe? "Let the wound caused by the serpent be cured by the serpent." Laid low by Coatlicue, the sufferer's only healthy alternative to suffering as a way of life is to embrace the Coatlicue state. This horrifying ordeal means going down into the depths of the soul in order to cross over to the other shore—the transformed self who has confronted the traumatizing and debilitating effects of internalized colonialism and who has reintegrated the stigmatized elements of the precolonized self (such as Coatlicue or Malinche or La Llorona) by embracing these elements in all their enabling forms (Alarcón 1989; Arrizón 2000; L. Pérez 1998). Such was the defining gesture of the Chicano movement: its embrace of the indigenous roots of Mexican American culture as an anticolonial act of self-definition, the transformation of the negative connotations of the name "Chicano" into a source of pride—for "Chicano" had previously pointed to the "barbaric" Indian half of the mestizo, the half that is the Mexica or meXicano victim of the Spanish Conquest (Alarcón 1989).

Anzaldúa's writings on the Coatlicue state are part of her function as an espiritualista, the spirit medium who engages in the healing activities of the shaman. Her journey through the "dark night of the soul" that characterizes the critical but horrifying process of self-revelation at the heart

of the Coatlicue state is a shamanic journey of healing. She describes the nature of this Coatlicue state:

> During the Coatlicue phase you thought you'd wandered off the path of conocimiento, but this detour is part of the path. Your bodymindsoul is the hermetic vessel where transformation takes place. The shift must be more than intellectual. Escaping the illusion of isolation, you prod yourself to get out of bed, clean your house, then yourself. You light la virgen de Guadalupe candle and copal, and, with a bundle of yierbitas (ruda y yerba buena), brush the smoke down your body, sweeping away the pain, grief, and fear of the past that's been stalking you, severing the cords binding you to it. (2002, 554)

Finally, Anzaldúa also participates in another crucial element of curanderismo—the transmission of cultural knowledge. Doña Lola, as we have seen, does this in her mentoring of Prietita. The speaker of the final poem in *Borderlands*, "No se raje, chicanita" ("Don't Give In, Chicanita"), also does so (Anzaldúa 1987, 222–25). Dedicated to Missy Anzaldúa, Gloria's niece, the poem brings the book to a close by emphasizing the need to pass on cultural wisdom so that the culture may survive and heal itself.

The translation of the title, although it was written by Anzaldúa herself, leaves out a crucial dimension of the colonial symbolism of the poem. "No se raje" literally means "don't split." The phrase thus operates within the tropological circulation of la rajadura, the internal soul-splitting that marks mestizaje throughout *Borderlands*. Anzaldúa is urging her niece to avoid the self-mutilating internalizations of colonialism. Yes, "don't split," "don't take off," "don't give in"—but more important, "don't split yourself as you attempt to make your way through the colonial conditions of the Borderlands." The first line—"No se raje mí prietita"—positions Missy Anzaldúa as another incarnation of Prietita. The curandera's prescription is to remember her roots in the people of the land "before the Gringo" (Anzaldúa 1987, 224, line 12). These roots are passed down by the "strong women" who have raised her: "my sister, your mom, my mother and I" (line 16). In the process, Anzaldúa seems to be healing herself as she takes her place in the family line of women who in other contexts have alienated her and treated her as the deviant. In accordance with many indigenous prophecies, these women, who take pride in their Mexicana-Chicana-Tejana and Indian spirit (24–25), will outlast the whites as the latter kill each other off.[11] And in a moment of connecting the power of women with revolutionary transformation, the speaker foresees the moment when that "sleeping serpent, / rebellion-(r)evolution, will spring up" (40–41).[12]

This revolutionary evolution through the healing path of Coatlicue into *la raza cósmica* will give serpent-woman body to Anzaldúa's decolonizing imperative: "Like old skin will fall the slave ways of / obedience, acceptance, silence. / Like serpent lightning we'll move, little woman" (42–45).

Decolonizing Indigenous Knowledges

The decolonizing impact of Anzaldúa's development of healing practices becomes especially clear when related to recent decolonization moves within indigenous theory and practice. As I suggested in my introduction, I want to initiate a gesture toward a kind of pan-tribal solidarity (including detribalized Chicana/os) by cross-reading Anzaldúa's curandera project within the terms of indigenous decolonization in order to see Anzaldúa as a bridge between militant Chicana anticolonial critics such as Chela Sandoval (2000) and scholar-activists in the global movements of indigenous decolonization such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Maori), Waziyatawin Angela Wilson (Dakota), and Taiaiake Alfred (Kanien'kehá:ka, or Mohawk). An extensive elaboration on the potential relationships between these writers is beyond the scope of this essay. I nevertheless want to suggest that the full decolonizing impact of Anzaldúa's indigenous project becomes clearer when viewed in such a context. I am not at all pretending to posit any direct influence in either direction between Anzaldúa's work and that of these writers (much of which has appeared since Anzaldúa's death); rather, I want to call for reading these projects as part of a larger decolonizing development.

While Anzaldúa does refer to Smith's book in her works cited section for "Now let us shift . . ." (2002, 590), she does not directly refer to Smith in the body of the essay. And while there has been a focus on decolonization among Chicana scholar-activists for some two decades now, much of which includes the refiguration of indigeneity and curanderismo in constructions of chicanisma (or Chicana feminism), I am especially interested in this essay in pursuing the hope for a Chicana/North American indigenous coalitional politics that Anzaldúa expresses in one of her last interviews (2004). Lara Medina has also stressed the coalition building that can result from the politically spiritualized turn to indigenismo, writing that as "*mestizas* living between the north and the south, these women act as bridges between groups. . . . Participating in ceremonies not only shares healing knowledge but builds political alliances between Chicanas and northern *indígena* peoples" (1998, 198). This healing, Medina claims, results from the

decolonization of the spirit through a reclaimed ritual community (191). This is what many scholars see as the promise of Anzaldúa's "spiritual activism" (Anzaldúa 2002; Keating 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c; Lara 2005, 2008; L. Pérez 1998; Ramírez 2002) and what AnaLouise Keating characterizes as Anzaldúa's "radically inclusive politics" (2008a, 53).

Linda Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999) critiques the standard Eurocentric academic methodology that bases itself on a presumed positivism. More important, she lays out the issues and alternative methodologies that indigenous peoples themselves should attend to in their research on their own communities, in terms and contexts specific to their communities. She cites as an example her own relationship to colonialism as an indigenous person of the place that Europeans called New Zealand. Smith lists twenty-five different indigenous decolonizing projects: claiming, testimonies, story telling, celebrating survival, remembering, indigenizing, intervening, revitalizing, connecting, reading, writing, representing, gendering, envisioning, reframing, restoring, returning, democratizing, networking, naming, protecting, creating, negotiating, discovering, and sharing. *Borderlands* and *Prietita and the Ghost Woman* enact each of these projects. The writing of Prietita's story, for example, intervenes in the colonizing process in order to provide the gendered revisioning of Chicana-indigenous practices and perspectives that allow the children (and adults) hearing or reading the book to discover ways to reclaim the vilified figures of womanhood and restore them to their rightful, celebrated roles as healing protectors of the people. This act testifies to the power of naming and self-representation as La Llorona is transformed from the evil child murderer into the divine cosmic healing force that Anzaldúa allows us to see in her. By sharing this democratizing challenge to patriarchal-colonial systems, the writer administers the curandera's remedy for the social ills of colonialism.

One of the most enabling elements of Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* is a chart consisting of labeled concentric circles that graphically illustrate some of the relationships between Smith's twenty-five (and other) decolonizing projects (fig. 1). In explaining the function of the chart, Smith writes, "Self-determination in a research agenda becomes something more than a political goal. It becomes a goal of social justice which is expressed through and across a wide range of psychological, social, cultural and economic terrains. It necessarily involves the processes of transformation, of decolonization, of healing and of mobilization as peoples" (1999, 116). In describing this diagram, Smith points to the wavelike nature of the concentric rings in relation to the center of self-determination. The

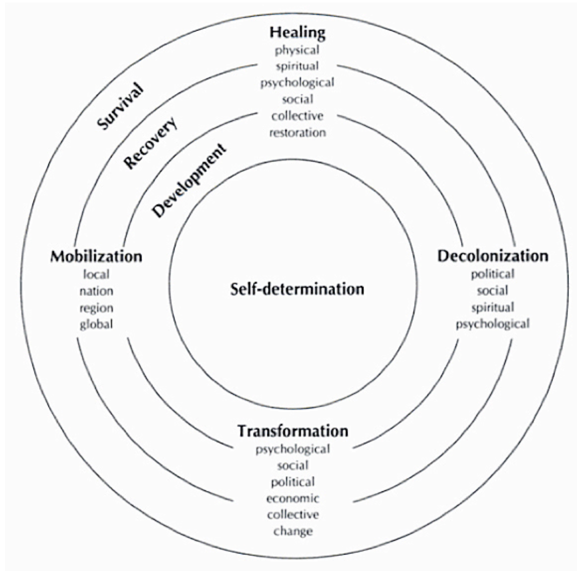

Figure 1. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, "The Indigenous Research Agenda," 1999. Reprinted by permission of Linda Tuhiwai Smith.

diagram, then, represents not simply a system of logical relationships but also a complex of phenomenological relationships, specifically the body's absorption of rhythmic and spatial influences in its environment and the impact of these influences on particular cosmological frameworks. The chart, Smith writes, uses the metaphor of ocean tides in order to present "a simple representation of an indigenous research agenda" from a Pacific peoples' perspective:

> From [this] perspective the sea is a giver of life, it sets time and conveys movement. Within the greater ebb and flow of the ocean are smaller localised environments which have enabled Pacific peoples to develop enduring relationships to the sea. For Polynesian peoples the significant deity of the sea is Tangaroa. Although there are many directions that can be named, the chart takes the Maori equivalent of the four directions: the northern, the eastern, the southern and the western. The tides represent movement, change, process, life, inward and outward flows of ideas, reflections and actions. The four directions named here—decolonization, healing, transformation and mobilization—represent processes. They are not goals or ends in themselves. They are processes which connect, inform and clarify the tensions between the local, the regional and the global. They are processes which can be incorporated into practices and methodologies. (116)

Smith relates this figural schema to what she refers to as the four major tides of indigenous decolonization: survival, recovery, development, self-determination. These conditions through which indigenous communities move are not sequential: "the survival of peoples as physical beings, of languages, of social and spiritual practices, of social relations, and of the arts are all subject to some basic prioritizing. Similarly, the recovery of territories, of indigenous rights, and histories are also subject to prioritizing and to recognition that indigenous cultures have changed inexorably." Given that "indigenous peoples are not in control and are subject to a continuing set of external conditions," Smith explains, "specific lands and designated areas become a priority because the bulldozers are due to start destruction any day now" (116). Again we see the fusion of theory and content as Smith, in explaining the function of her chart, draws together methodological principles, localizing metaphors (tides), decolonizing goals (survival, recovery, development, self-determination), pragmatic considerations (recognizing the influences of cultural change and colonial power structures), and stark images of colonialism in action (the bulldozer).

One of the methodologies Smith discusses is the decolonizing project of connecting—which is also one of Anzaldúa's primary projects. Smith explains the notion of connection by enacting it, showing the connections between diverse kinds of connectedness, all of which are connected to colonialism's forces of disconnection: "Many indigenous creation stories," Smith writes, "link people through genealogy to the land, to stars and other places in the universe, to birds and fish, animals, insects and plants. To be connected is to be whole." Such a connecting process in New South Wales, for example, literally connects members of families with one another as a way of restoring "the descendants of 'stolen children' . . . to their family connections." Indigenous children had been forcibly taken from their families and put through a dehumanizing adoption process. "Being reconnected to their families and their culture has been a painful journey for many of these children, now adults." Another form of reconnection involves the restoration of rituals and practices. "In New Zealand," Smith explains, "one example of this is the practice of burying the afterbirth in the land. The word for afterbirth is the same as the word for land, *whenua*" (150). Here we see the "connections" established between the various modes of connection: connections through cosmology, family, community, ritual practice, and linguistic patterns. Colonization involves a host of practices and institutions of disconnection, and so decolonization requires a host of practices and institutions of reconnection.

One of the decolonizing projects most connected to my discussion of Anzaldúa's healing project is restoring. Approaches to spiritual, emotional, physical, and material restoration must be framed in local indigenous terms. "Restorative justice in Canada, for example," writes Smith, "applies concepts of the 'healing circle' and victim restoration which are based on indigenous processes." She points to similar programs elsewhere: "In New Zealand adoption policies and programmes for dealing with children have similarly coopted indigenous practices. Restoring is a project which is conceived as a holistic approach to problem solving. It is holistic in terms of the emotional, spiritual and physical nexus, and also in terms of the individual and the collective, the political and the cultural. Restorative programmes are based on a model of healing rather than of punishing" (155). While these programs involve elements from a variety of cultures, including Western, and might thus be seen as "hybrid" constructs, the key here is that whatever the component elements of the programs, the framework is defined according to specific indigenous ways of thinking and knowing.

Just such a specified framing is at the heart of the indigenous decolonization movement in North America. For Waziyatawin, "decolonization concerns a simultaneous critical interrogation of the colonizing forces that have damaged our lives in profound ways, coupled with a return to those ways that nourished and sustained us as Indigenous Peoples for thousands of years" (Wilson 2005, 1). Decolonization, then, involves a double gesture of exposing the processes of genocidal attempts at cultural erasure coupled with a self-reflective cultural revitalization. For Waziyatawin and Taiaiake both, this double gesture operates at once within a local, tribal cultural-political-spiritual context as well as on a global scale. Waziyatawin writes, "With 300 million Indigenous Peoples worldwide with common histories of struggle against colonialism and neocolonialism, we have tremendous potential to transform the world" (13).

Colonization, Taiaiake explains, is an ongoing process that does not simply involve the theft of land and the imposition of alien political, economic, linguistic, and religious structures onto indigenous peoples, although all of that is involved. Most important, colonization means the wearing down and stripping away of indigenous spirit and values that manifest themselves in the rituals and relationships of daily existence. Decolonization, then, demands the conscious, active reorientation of each moment, of each gesture toward a revitalization of traditional indigenous values. These values can then provide for a resurgence of Onkwehonwe (original peoples') existence, the experiential "rites of resurgence" that define original

people, as Taiaiake puts it in *Wasáse* (Alfred 2005, 29). "Make no mistake about it, Brothers and Sisters," Taiaiake warns, "the war is on. There is no post-colonial situation; the invaders our ancestors fought against are still here, for they have not yet rooted themselves and been transformed into real people of this homeland" (38).[13]

Drawing on past and present indigenous sources and traditions in their definitions of decolonization, both of these writers fight to reclaim lands, treaty rights, native languages, and indigenous pride and dignity based on a revitalization or resurgence of traditional indigenous values and customs. For both activists, the reclamation of the past becomes a critical element of the present move toward a future self-determination for Indian peoples unshackled by the institutions and ideological chains of colonialism. Taiaiake's decolonial project begins with his recognition that the processes of colonization run much deeper and along a greater number of diverse channels than has previously been recognized, resulting in a nearly paralyzing state of internalized colonization and the nearly complete destruction of indigenous modes of being. Such, I have been arguing, is at the heart of Anzaldúa's decolonizing indigenism.

The primary goal of decolonization as Waziyatawin approaches it is cultural survival. In *Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives* (Wilson 2005), Waziyatawin foregrounds the decolonizing challenge of indigenous oral history to the Eurocentric assumptions and validation processes whereby historians in power determine the value of sources, methods, and definitions. By recording the oral stories told to her in the Dakota language by her adopted grandfather, Eli Taylor, and by elaborating on how these stories reveal the underlying worldview of the Dakota, Waziyatawin also helps pass down a body of historical material that will serve in the reconstruction of Dakota culture. Noting that stories told in one's native language "teach more about how we look into the past, how we make sense of that past, and how we remain affected today," Waziyatawin points to the broader significance of these stories: they provide the "ability to define our history for ourselves, shaping our historical consciousness in a way that inextricably links it with our sense of identity" (17). She continues:

> The stories have a transformative effect in our contemporary lives because they help determine our sense of who we are and where we are going. Through gifted storytellers the stories are interpreted through the generations, and we come to understand the meaning of being Dakota. This understanding and sense of identity is one that transcends time,

> the changing world, and modern technology. It is what will carry us into the future. (17)

The implications of this passage are enormous. Through this single project Waziyatawin brings together decolonizing processes for dealing with language and tradition; family and community; academic disciplines (and disciplining) and local knowledges; relationships to past, present, and future; individual and tribal identities; and the limiting impact of Eurocentric modernity.[14] These decolonizing processes extend to governance, economic organization, spirituality, and dignity. This is exactly in line with the projects of both Anzaldúa and Smith.

Mestiza-Indigenist Consciousness and the Curandera of Conquest

As we have seen through an exploration of Prietita, the elements of curanderismo, and recent developments in indigenous decolonization theory, Anzaldúa offers her mestiza consciousness as a path of power and healing. In her essay "Poet as *Curandera*," Pat Mora makes the following observation: "Just as the *curandera* uses white magic, manipulates the symbols that are part of her patients' experience base to ease communication, the Chicana writer seeks to heal cultural wounds of historical neglect by providing opportunities to remember the past, to share and ease bitterness, to describe what has been viewed as unworthy of description, to cure by incantations and rhythms, by listening with her entire being and responding. She then gathers the tales and myths, weaves them together, and, if lucky, casts spells" (1993, 131). *Borderlands* is just such a woven work of healing. Tey Diana Rebolledo argues that the "curandera emerges as a compelling figure in Chicano literature because she is a woman who has control over her own life and destiny as well as that of others. . . . She has a special relationship to and understanding of earth and nature—she understands the cycles of creation, development, and destruction, thus unifying the past, present, and future. She incorporates intuition and rationality; she studies power and bends with it or harnesses it; she takes an active role in her environment" (1995, 86–97).

Anzaldúa would prefer to live in a world that was never wounded in the first place and that therefore would not require the development and honing of mestiza consciousness (Joysmith 2009). We must recognize that her classic *Borderlands* is not so much a celebration of mestiza consciousness

as it is the identification of a weapon in the fight against colonization and the remedy that can cure the stunted spiritual condition of internalized colonization. The historical origin of mestizaje in the Americas is, after all, in violence, rape, and conquest; it is not a condition that anyone strove for before or after 1521. The "mestiza" consciousness that Anzaldúa in fact celebrates draws the notion of mestizaje into a primarily indigenized circle of relationships that go far beyond the pairing of the Spanish Cortés and indigenous Malintzín, the usual imaginary parents of Mexicanidad. This is no notion of racial purity, but rather an imperative to recognize the suppressed side of mestizaje. Anzaldúa does not turn to mestizaje as a condition of mixed identity to be celebrated in some postmodern veneration of multiplicity and difference, as a force that—according to the worn-out formula of much postmodern cultural studies—troubles the fixed boundaries of white-supremacist identity. In fact, I would argue that mestizaje more often than not tends to reinforce notions of racial purity by embodying that which is to be feared and eradicated by eugenicist practices. The sight of the other as other reinforces the policing of the boundaries of the self. Anzaldúa turns instead to mestizaje as experiential knowledge,[15] a knowledge that can challenge racist or sexist identities made possible (but not necessary) by the border condition of cultural mix-up. Anzaldúa's ultimate decolonizing act is to elaborate on the indigenous contexts of mestizaje. As such, she herself is the curandera of conquest.

Notes

1. Anzaldúa describes mestiza consciousness as follows: "The work of *mestiza* consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended. The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts" (1987, 102).

2. Much of the crucial decolonization work done by Chicana feminists in the 1990s (especially that written in relation to Anzaldúa) operated within the terms of postmodern theory, albeit sometimes as a critical appropriation of postmodernist themes and figures. For example, in *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*, Emma Pérez writes that Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* "was to be the progression toward postmodern, postnational identities for Chicanas/mestizas" (1999, 25). Seeing postmodern critique as primarily one internal to

the Eurocentric discourse of modernity, I am more concerned here with the ways in which Anzaldúa's emphasis on indigeneity operates within a different mode altogether. See also Alarcón (1989, 1995, 1996, 1999), Aldama (2001), D. Castillo (1995), González (2004), Lara (2008), Sandoval (2000), Torres (2003), and Yarbro-Bejarano (1994).

3. The male is called a *curandero*. *Curanderismo* refers to the practice of this so-called folk medicine. See Avila (1999).

4. *Prietita and the Ghost Woman* is not paginated, so quotations will not include page references.

5. Anzaldúa's father was a sharecropper in an experimental government program for farmers, Rio Farms, which was adjacent to the King Ranch (1987, 31). For a brief history of Rio Farms, see Santa Ana (2001). For a sense of the King Ranch's romanticization of its role in the conquest of Texas, see the ranch's website at http://www.king-ranch.com. For the impact of the Anglo invasion on indigenous peoples in Texas, see Anderson (2005); for its impact on the newly independent Mexicans, see Chávez (2007) and Ramos (2008).

6. For an extended discussion of this notion of the eclipse of the female genetrix, see Paula Gunn Allen's *The Sacred Hoop*, particularly the chapter titled "Grandmother of the Sun: Ritual Gynocracy in Native America" (1992, 13–29).

7. Anzaldúa (2002, 577, n.4) explains her use of the nagual figure as follows: "*Naguala* is the feminine form of *nagual*, the capacity some people such as mexican indigenous shamans have of 'shapeshifting'—becoming an animal, place, or thing by inhabiting that thing or by shifting into the perspective of their animal companion. I have extended the term to include an aspect of the self unknown to the conscious self. Nagualismo is a Mexican spiritual knowledge system where the practitioner searches for spirit signs. I call the maker of spirit signs 'la naguala,' a creative, dreamlike consciousness able to make broader associations and connections than waking consciousness."

8. For example, in *Borderlands* she speaks to the indigenous nature of Mexican folk practice: "My family, like most Chicanos, did not practice Roman Catholicism but a folk Catholicism with many pagan elements. La Virgen de Guadalupe's Indian name is Coatlalopeuh. She is the central deity connecting us to our Indian ancestry" (1987, 47).

9. This charge of romantic appropriation has also been leveled against Anzaldúa by Chicana/o scholars such as Contreras (2008), Sáenz (1997), and Saldaña-Portillo (2001). Anzaldúa (2000, 2004) speaks directly of her involvement with contemporary indigenous political issues in her interviews with Hernández-Avila and *SAIL*.

10. Torres (2003, chap. 1) offers a compelling prescription for dealing with the trauma of colonization. She suggests that Chicanas must first acknowledge the historical and contemporary roots of colonialism in internalized shame, then engage in constructive releases of anger at those colonizing roots, and finally, move from pain toward love as an act of resistance against the oppressor and a healing act of self-empowerment.

11. Just five years after the publication of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Leslie Marmon Silko published her monumental novel *Almanac of the Dead* (1992), which

also revolves around indigenous prophecies of the liberation of the Americas after the self-destruction of Euro-American society.

12. Interestingly, this explicit connection between evolution and revolution does not occur in the Spanish version, where both terms are conflated into one, *rebeldía*.

13. In the preface to his second edition of *Peace, Power, Righteousness* (Alfred 2009), Taiaiake provides an important overview of his work of the past fifteen years, beginning with *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors* (Alfred 1995).

14. See also Wilson (2008) and Wilson and Yellow Bird (2005) for a fuller understanding of Waziyatawin's methodology.

15. This turn to experiential knowledge or *la facultad* could be aligned with the work done in the wake of Satya Mohanty (1997) were it not for the lingering Eurocentric cast of that project, signaled by the self-chosen label of postpositivism. Such a positioning in relation to the Western legacy of positivism remains bound by what the "post" suggests has been superseded. The whole postpositivist argument against postmodern "relativism" remains bound to a conversation that operates within and remains subject to the terms of Western metaphysics; the "claims of history" should be made in another arena altogether. Postpositivism thus must be seen as the internal critique of positivism itself. I am thinking in particular of the work of Chandra Mohanty (2003), relating Mohanty's thought to global feminism; Moya (2001), relating to Chicanos; and Teuton (2008), relating to American Indians.

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