

GROUNDING SPIRITUAL ACTIVISM IN GLORIA ANZALDÚA: A NEW
EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE HEART, ETHICS OF THE ENVIRONMENT, AND ONTOLOGY
OF PLANETARY CITIZENRY

by

ANDRES AYALA-PATLAN

B.A., California State Polytechnic University, 2013

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Humanities
Humanities Program

2018

ProQuest Number: 10982844

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10982844

Published by ProQuest LLC (2018). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

This thesis for the Master of Humanities degree by

Andres Ayala-Patlan

has been approved for the

Master of Humanities Program

by

Sarah K. Tyson, Chair

Gillian Silverman

Omar Swartz

Date: December 15, 2018

Ayala-Patlan, Andres (MH, Humanities Program)

Grounding Spiritual Activism in Gloria Anzaldúa: A New Epistemology of the Heart, Ethics of the Environment, and Ontology of Planetary Citizenry

Thesis directed by Professor Sarah K. Tyson

ABSTRACT

This thesis will look at Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of spiritual activism, primarily in her final book, *Luz en lo Oscuro (Light in the Dark): Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*¹.

Spirituality, I suggest, lies at the heart of Anzaldúa's dynamic and comprehensive philosophy, and to overlook or underplay its role is to misunderstand and misrepresent Anzaldúa herself.²

Luz en lo Oscuro (Light in the Dark) reveals key insights into how spirituality impacts contemporary and global issues, which leads to the conclusion that we must address the epistemic injustice of seeing spirituality as an inferior form of knowledge-production in contemporary academia and neocolonial globalization. This shift in Anzaldúa's work from a focus on race, gender, sex, culture, and class to global injustices and oppressions models a needed shift in consciousness shift, I argue, in how we see ourselves, others, the planet, and reality itself.³

Spiritual activism, according to Anzaldúa, views self transformation as intimately linked with political and global transformation. It attempts to establish a holistic framework in which we can see social, racial, sexual, political, and cultural injustices as inherently psychical, emotional, and spiritual problems that are intimately tied to one another. In illuminating, building upon, and applying this rich theoretical structure, I show how spiritual activism allows us to

¹Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. Duke University Press, 2015.

²Ibid. p. xxviii.

³Anzaldúa, Gloria and AnaLouise Keating. *Interviews = Entrevistas*. New York: Routledge, 2000. p. 8.

synthesize a new epistemological-ethical-ontological matrix that prompts global transformation in order to establish positive social change. I show how spiritual activism allows us to construct a new epistemological-ethical-ontological matrix in three innovative ways:

First, spiritual activism gives us a new epistemology of the heart that involves two key elements: (i) the emotional heart (ii) and the spiritual/energetic heart⁴. Secondly, Anzaldúa's spiritual activism gives us a new ethic of the natural environment by recognizing (i) today's neocolonial globalization and its exploitative structure of natural space which exacerbates environmental degradation and resource inequality and (ii) gives potential theoretical support to permaculture ideologies and practices which aim to establish agricultural, environmental, and ecological sustainability. Lastly, Anzaldúa has given us a new ontology of the world or planetary citizen by highlighting and reflecting upon the relationship between (i) self and global transformation and (ii) the role of balance and healing in creating interdependent identity-formations and sustainable communities and societies. In sum, spiritual activism offers an integrated framework for reimagining self and global identities that recognize a new epistemology of the heart, ethics of the natural environment, and ontology of what Anzaldúa calls a world or planetary citizen in which one sees oneself as metaphysically interconnected with others, animals, and the planet itself in order to establish positive, substantial, and everlasting social change.⁵

The form and content of this abstract are approved. I recommend its publication.

Approved: Sarah K. Tyson

⁴See McCraty, Rollin. "The Energetic Heart: Bioelectromagnetic Communication within and between People." *Bioelectromagnetic Medicine*. New York: Marcel Dekker, 2004. 541-62.

⁵Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. p. 155.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTERS

I. AN INTRODUCTION TO SPIRITUAL ACTIVISM	1
II. A NEW EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE HEART	36
III. A NEW ETHICS OF THE ENVIRONMENT	63
IV. A NEW ONTOLOGY OF PLANETARY CITIZENRY	78
V. CONCLUSION	103
REFERENCES	113

CHAPTER ONE: AN INTRODUCTION TO SPIRITUAL ACTIVISM

Statement of the Problem

Gloria E. Anzaldúa's work has crossed many borders among academic disciplines. She is studied in postcolonial studies, women's studies, feminist theory, gender studies, social and political theory, critical theory, and Chicana studies, among others. Various scholars have employed Anzaldúa's later theories to a variety of issues and topics such as social justice in education and pedagogy⁶, Chicana and gender studies⁷, women of color in academia⁸, Mexican art and social movements⁹, Latino studies¹⁰, and even performative art¹¹. While Anzaldúa is primarily and famously known through her canonical text, *Borderlands*¹², which undertakes a postcolonial analysis of oppression using a third world Latina feminist lens, I focus on her later, as yet under-explored, and under-appreciated work and concepts. I analyze Gloria Anzaldúa's later concept of *spiritual activism* because it offers us a new and rich theoretical framework in which we can rethink natural space, identity, and transformation and gives us new ways to think about and facilitate the radical change needed to positively transform our social, environmental, and global condition.

⁶See Elenes, C Alejandra Elenes, C. "Nepantla, Spiritual Activism, New Tribalism: Chicana Feminist Transformative Pedagogies and Social Justice Education." *Journal of Latino/Latina American Studies* 5, no. 3 (2013): 132-41.

⁷See Lara, Irene. "Bruja Positionalities: Toward a Chicana/Latina Spiritual Activism." *Chicana/Latina Studies* (2005): 10-45.

⁸See Castillo-Garsow, Melissa. "The Legacy of Gloria Anzaldúa: Finding a Place for Women of Color in Academia." *Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe* 31, no. 1 (2012): 3-11.

⁹See McCaughan, Edward J. McCaughan. "Notes on Mexican Art, Social Movements, and Anzaldúa's 'Conocimiento'." *Social Justice* 33, no. 2:104 (2006): 153-64.

¹⁰See Ortega, Mariana. "'This Thin Edge of Barbwire:' Selves from the Land in the Middle." *Latino Studies* 2.3 (2004): 298-303.

¹¹See Andrade, Luis M and Robert Gutierrez-Perez. "Bailando Con Las Sombras: Spiritual Activism and Soul Healing in the War Years." *Qualitative Inquiry* 23, no. 7 (2017): 502-04.

¹²See Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands : The New Mestiza = La Frontera*. 1st ed. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987.

More specifically, I will examine her final and posthumously published book, *Luz en lo Oscuro (Light in the Dark): Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, and Reality*, which suggests that we need to (re)consider the fundamental relationships we have with ourselves, others, the environment, and reality itself if we are to positively change our worldviews, actions, and realities. Anzaldúa's spiritual activism is particularly challenging to privileged westerners and U.S. citizens in the 21st century, who need to address these neocolonial world trends and injustices which have and will continue to cause rampant global inequality and disconnection with others, animals, and the natural environment. Furthermore, Anzaldúa's spiritual activism gives us the theoretical foundation needed to change the way we in this position come to know, act, and be in the world, necessitating new individual and collective identity-formations for the betterment of our current global society. In other words, spiritual activism and its theoretical foundations supports those most privileged by oppressive structures to create a positive, substantial, and ever-lasting social change.

Luz en lo Oscuro (Light in the Dark) was Anzaldúa's doctoral dissertation when she studied at University of California, Santa Cruz. It explores knowledge-production as it is inflected and shaped by social justice issues, identity (trans)formation, and healing.¹³ In it, Anzaldúa attempts to capture the act and art of transformation and self-healing through the writing process itself. Anzaldúa's writing engages in a meta-conversation with her audience, acknowledging the corporeality and material condition of the reader in an attempt to shake herself and her audience out of apathy, stagnation, and fragmentation. Throughout *Luz en lo Oscuro (Light in the Dark)* and in a memoir-like and monographic style, she uses her life experiences as a source of metaphors and examples that depict the process of change, capturing

¹³Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. Ibid. p. i.

her transformative process through written word. Anzaldúa's writing is a material result of her attempt to transform herself and express her ever-changing identity and perceptual reality, experimenting with content and form¹⁴, challenging conventional procedures, genres, academic disciplines, and standardized writing processes¹⁵.

Anzaldúa's work and legacy has already profoundly reshaped modern academia as she continues to be studied in many disciplines. Her groundbreaking work *Borderlands* has become canonical in various fields and disciplines. As vital as this text is for tracing and understanding Anzaldúa's thinking, life experience, and overall philosophy, her later works suggests a fundamental shift and continued evolution in her thinking, especially concerning her use and understanding of spirituality and social activism. If we attend to it, this shift in Anzaldúa's work could steer conversations away from just critically analyzing racial, cultural, sexual, ethnic, and geographical borderlands to spiritual, global, emotional, psychic, and conscious/unconscious borderlands.¹⁶ In *Luz en lo Oscuro (Light in the Dark)*, Anzaldúa builds on her earlier conception of 'la mestiza consciousness', and she constructs and develops a new set of more dynamic and comprehensive concepts, explored below, such as "nepantla", "conocimiento", "Coyolxauhqui Imperative", "the new tribalism", "nos/otras", and my conceptual focus, "spiritual activism."

Anzaldúa's conceptualization and centralizing of spirituality is the heart of her overall philosophy and has yet to be adequately addressed in the contemporary academic landscape. The secondary literature on Gloria Anzaldúa's spirituality and its role in her philosophy, when it does

¹⁴Ibid. p. xii.

¹⁵Ibid. p. xiv.

¹⁶Anzaldúa, Gloria and AnaLouise Keating. *Interviews = Entrevistas*. New York: Routledge, 2000. p.7.

make the connections does not yet do so in a way that fully appreciates its importance.¹⁷ Spiritual activism, as Keating argues, is the nucleus of what intricately connects Anzaldúa's epistemology, ethics, politics, metaphysics, ontology, and aesthetics together and drastically differs from other modern conceptions of spirituality.¹⁸ Likewise, Michelle R. Martin-Baron notes:

Spirituality runs throughout Anzaldúa's *oeuvre*, but is not often remarked upon in academic engagements with her work. Importantly, there's no escaping spirituality when engaging with *Light in the Dark*, as it runs as a key theme in all of the chapters...Part prayer and part philosophical treatise, Anzaldúa emphasizes the centrality of spirituality not only for her own work, but for her broader work of healing a broken world.¹⁹

Martin-Baron furthermore illustrates the centrality and importance of spirituality and describes Anzaldúa's last text as not only a cornerstone piece in her *oeuvre*, important to the growing field of scholarship on Anzaldúa, but also a text that speaks broadly across women's studies, philosophy, politics, Chicana/o and Latina/o studies, border studies, native studies, sexuality studies and beyond.²⁰ However, to be clear, Anzaldúa rejects 'New Age' or popularized forms of 21st century spirituality in which one narcissistically focuses on the personal or individual self, limiting one's concerns to one's own desires, goals, and well-being without considering social, communal, environmental, and global injustices and forms of oppression.²¹ Part of Anzaldúa's legacy and life project involve not only critiquing and addressing social, racial, gender, sexual, ethnic, and class injustices perpetrated by western Anglo ideology and culture, but also the

¹⁷Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. p. 8.

¹⁸*Ibid.* p. 246.

¹⁹Martin-Baron, Michelle R. (2016) *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, by Gloria Anzaldua and edited by AnaLouise Keating, International Feminist Journal of Politics, 18:4, pp. 623-625. p. 624-5.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. p. 246.

epistemic injustices²² and intellectual barriers that preclude the theorizing and practicing of spirituality and of other ways of seeing and relating to oneself, others, the planet, and reality itself. She thereby opens paths to considering spirituality anew. Robert Guitierrez-Perez also notes that “*Light in the Dark* is a bright and shining beacon for scholars, activists, and practitioners searching for a comprehensive philosophy or personal and social transformation...every breath feels like an act of resistance”—acknowledging the ways *Light in the Dark* investigates issues of globalization and violence and is, first and foremost, a call to action.²³ Thus, *Luz en lo Oscuro (Light in the Dark)* reveals key insights into the development and articulation of not just spirituality, but spiritual activism.

Anzaldúa defines spiritual activism as the amalgam of spiritual practices with political activism. She states:

In trying to make sense of what’s happening, some of us come into deep awareness (conocimiento) of political and spiritual situations and the unconscious mechanisms that abet hate, intolerance, and discord. I name this searching, inquiring, and healing consciousness ‘conocimiento.’ Conocimiento urges us to respond not just with the traditional practices of spirituality (contemplation, meditation, and private rituals) or with the technologies of political activism (protests, demonstrations, and speakouts), but with the amalgam of the two: spiritual activism.²⁴

Spiritual activism, guided by conocimiento push us to engage with spiritual technologies (contemplation, meditation, and private rituals) in order to confront our social sickness with new

²²I will borrow this term from Miranda Fricker’s *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*: Oxford University Press, 2007. Epistemic injustice, or testimonial or hermeneutical injustice, refers to the ways in which someone is wronged specifically in his or her capacity as a knower, wronged in a capacity essential to human value. I will thus use this term to highlight the ways in which spirituality, emotionality, and personal history are discounted and seen as inferior modes of knowing in western academia.

²³Guitierrez-Perez, Robert (2017) Anzaldúa, Gloria E. *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality.*, *Women’s Studies in Communication*. 40: 3, pp. 306-308. p. 307.

²⁴Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. p. 19.

tools, goals, and practices whose aim is to effect a psycho-spiritual-political shift (i.e. spiritual activism). Anzaldúa dubs this new consciousness shift, ‘Spirit-in-the-world’— when our spirit becomes conscious of itself in the world.²⁵ Spirit-in-the-world also recognizes the complex relationship between healing and transformation, as transformation leads to healing, and healing leads to transformation.²⁶ As the pursuit of Spirit-in-the-world, spiritual activism incorporates traditional spiritual and political practices and methods with new technologies and goals. Spiritual activism suggests that we can transform and -shape reality by writing new narratives and changing our perspectives and perceptions by actively choosing a different, positive future guided by *conocimiento*.

Further, Anzaldúa’s spirituality is the process of connection between different realities, consciousnesses, and all phenomena. She recognizes the limitation of ‘New Age’ spiritualities or spiritual materialism which disconnects itself from the concrete political, social, and economic realities of people’s lives and struggles.²⁷ This disconnection gives impetus for the need to do bridge or soul work in mediating between spiritual practices and the real, empirical need for political and social change. Anzaldúa further argues for spiritual activism:

Most contemporary spiritual practitioners in this country ignore the political implications and do not concern themselves with our biggest problems and challenge: racism and other racial abuses. They’re not concerned with violence against children and women, with poverty and the attacks against nature. I describe the activist stance that explores spirituality’s social implications as ‘spiritual activism’—an activism that is engaged by a diverse group of people with different practices, or spiritual *mestizaje*.²⁸

Spiritual activism does not exclude larger socio-political issues such as racism, sexism, classism, and environmental degradation. Rather, spiritual activism utilizes old spiritual traditions and

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid. p. 39.

²⁸Ibid.

customs and pragmatically and critically aims them at our contemporary social and global injustices. What differentiates spiritual activism from traditional spiritual practices, however, is its constant innovative, ever-changing, and versatile framework, attempting to expand on one's individual reality, acknowledging the interconnection between others and larger social and natural systems. This active Spirit-in-the-world recognizes today's social conditions and issues in order to transform society, not to merely sustain religious or traditional spiritual practices or have an ontologically-fixed belief in spirits or external spiritual reality in itself. Spiritual activism's reconstructions are always in progress; the world, society, individual, and culture are always in compositional and decompositional states, with a main goal is bringing about positive social change.²⁹ Thus, unlike new age spirituality, personal transcendence is not the goal, nor merely sustaining a tradition, but rather social change itself.

Anzaldúa's spiritual activism and its vision of a new connected world contemplates a radical inclusionary politics built on alliances, and what AnaLouise Keating calls a "metaphysics of interconnectedness"³⁰ between others, and all realities, both human and non-human. This metaphysics of interconnectedness seeks to destabilize and decolonize traditional forms of dominance, power, and oppressive structures. Instead, it aims to materialize a world in which we act on the interconnectedness and mediate the in-between spaces of the infinite relationships we have with ourselves, others, nature, and the planet itself.³¹ According to Keating, spiritual activism is the "interweaving the personal with the collective", an "ethics of interconnectivity",

²⁹Ibid. p. 43.

³⁰Ibid. p. 246.

³¹Henderson-Espinoza, Robyn. "Gloria Anzaldúa's El Mundo Zurdo: Exploring a Relational Feminist Theology of Interconnectedness." *Journal for the Study of Religion* 26, no. 2 (2013). p. 116.

which is a “completely embodied, highly political endeavour” aimed at decolonializing systemic oppressions.³² Thus, we can see how far reaching Anzaldúa’s final work is.

El conocimiento, as described by Anzaldúa, contributes to this spiritual process because it requires us to expand on our notions of who we think we are and the ways to healing, transformation, and positive social change. It requires that we act *as if* we are all metaphysically interconnected, accessing our connectionist faculties in order to bring upon positive social change, centralizing praxis instead of belief in objectively real spirits. That acting *as if* allows us to shed light on our ignorance, fear, and pain. It requires us to expand and apply all that we learn to our daily activities, to our relationship with ourselves, with others, and nature.³³ When we enter into the subjunctive-form, the “as if” mode of thinking, then these words and ideas can make a genuine difference in our moral lives, according to Anzaldúa. Yet, most of Anzaldúa’s scholarship has paid relatively scant attention to the implications of her practice and theorization of spirituality and spiritual activism.³⁴ Because for Anzaldúa, el conocimiento gives the knowledge that allows us to apply what we learn to the real world, and because it leads to new organizations and organizing principles, a new order, a new mode of being and relating to the world and natural environment, I center this concept in my analysis.³⁵

The difficulty of such an endeavor is not to be underestimated. Christopher D. Tirres, one of the only scholars who have directly taken up spiritual activism in *Luz en lo Oscuro (Light in the Dark)*, accurately depicts the tension of spiritual realism—the belief in spirits—and social

³²Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. p xxiii, xxiv.

³³Ibid. p. 91.

³⁴Tirres, Christopher D. 'Spiritual Realities and Spiritual Activism: Assessing Gloria Anzaldúa's *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro*', *Diálogo*, vol. 21/no. 2, (2018), pp. 51-64. p. 61.

³⁵Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. p. 92.

activism that has long plagued Anzaldúa's philosophy and scholarship. Tirres suggests that *Light in the Dark* offers us some important clues about the intricacies of Anzaldúa's spiritual vision and practice.³⁶ He argues the articulation of spiritual activism in this text helps to clarify her conflicting stances on spiritual realism (i.e., the view that there exists a metaphysically real spiritual reality).

The question 'Are spirits real?' has troubled Anzaldúa throughout her works and has constituted a theme in criticisms of her work.³⁷ Tirres outlines two positions Anzaldúa commonly ascribed to before this text's publication: a *realist* position, which assumes that spirits are real and metaphysically exist in reality, and a *pluralist* position, which assumes that spirits are both literally and imaginatively real. While *Luz en lo Oscuro (Light in the Dark)* echoes both positions, it offers a third *functionalist* and *pragmatic* option that sets Anzaldúa's understanding of spirituality and social activism in a new light.³⁸ Tirres correctly points out that Anzaldúa is mostly concerned with whether or not spiritual journeys and experiences make positive changes in a person's life. He argues that this third functionalist position best meshes with Anzaldúa's underlying commitment to spiritual activism as a form of praxis, escaping the cul-de-sacs and pitfalls of spiritual metaphysical realism.³⁹

The main question that *Luz en lo Oscuro (Light in the Dark)* asks, according to Tirres, is: in what ways do our bodies, not just our minds, know? How can intuitions, dreams, feelings be valid forms of knowledge? And, most importantly, in what ways can knowledge be creatively

³⁶Tirres, Christopher D. 'Spiritual Realities and Spiritual Activism: Assessing Gloria Anzaldúa's *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro*.' p. 51.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid. p. 52.

used to bring about social transformation?⁴⁰ Anzaldúa's development of her conception of spirituality works toward the goal of bringing about of positive change. Anzaldúa states, "Through creative engagements, you embed your experiences in a larger frame of reference, connecting your personal struggles with those of other beings on the planet, with the struggles of the Earth itself. To understand the greater reality that lies behind your personal perceptions, you view these struggles as spiritual understandings."⁴¹ This "larger frame of reference" gives us insight into the greater reality that lies behind our individual epistemologies and realities, widening its scope to global concerns, deepening our understanding of the reality of our situation, and ushering new ways of being in the world.⁴² This widening is at the heart of spirituality for Anzaldúa and our understanding of spiritual activism.

Anzaldúa's understanding of spirituality not only matures significantly over the course of her career, but also continues to be marked by certain unresolved philosophical tensions, wrestling with competing ideas of spirituality (spiritual realism, pluralism, and functionalism).⁴³ Tirres explicates these lingering tensions by examining Anzaldúa's early writings, which suggest that she approached spirituality in terms of discreet paranormal and out-of-body experiences and out-of-the-ordinary events, drawing largely on her own spiritual experiences.⁴⁴ In other interviews, Anzaldúa describes other events in which she 'sees spirits', experiences feelings of being immobilized during meditation, and connects her multiple selves through orgasm.⁴⁵ In another telling interview with AnaLouise Keating, Anzaldúa is directly asked whether or not she

⁴⁰Ibid. p. 54.

⁴¹Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality* p. 119.

⁴²Tirres, Christopher D. 'Spiritual Realities and Spiritual Activism: Assessing Gloria Anzaldúa's *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro*'. p. 55.

⁴³Ibid. p. 55.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

believes in ‘extra-terrestrial spirits.’: “ALK: Don’t you think it’s going to make you less respectable and less reputable—because a lot of scholars don’t believe in such things?” Anzaldúa passionately remarks, “Tough shit! Once I get past my own censorship of what I should write about, I don’t care what other people say. Some things were hard for me to reveal but my strong vocation for writing makes me more open. To be a writer means to communicate...”⁴⁶ We can see here that Anzaldúa is not afraid to speak about ‘extra-terrestrial spirits’ and her direct belief in them. However, Anzaldúa is ultimately more interested in communicating and sharing experiences, especially censored experiences deemed incredulous and inappropriate for modern academia. Thus, we ask the wrong question if we focus on whether or not Anzaldúa believes spirits are real.

But we are still left with the question of how we, her readers, are to assess such claims and dimensions of her work? How do claims of spiritual metaphysical realism reconcile other dimensions of her work such as social activism, Chicana studies, and decolonialism? Tirres suggests that Anzaldúa’s decision to share her spiritual experiences presents an important challenge to traditional academic disciplines which tend to distance themselves from studies of esotericism and paranormal experiences.⁴⁷ Anzaldúa seems to support the idea that spirits are objectively real, and Tirres correctly notes that written decades later, *Light in the Dark* still presents the quandary of ‘Are spirits real?’ Anzaldúa states that “I’ve been asked this question many times and each time the question takes me back to my childhood when I learned, witnessing las curanderas de mi mamá grande, that the physical world is not the only reality.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶Anzaldúa, Gloria and AnaLouise Keating. *Interviews = Entrevistas*. New York: Routledge, 2000. p. 17.

⁴⁷Ibid. p. 56.

⁴⁸Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality* p. 58.

Her belief in curanderismos—those able to heal with and access spiritual reality—and the metaphysical reality of spirits continue to suggest her objective belief in spirits. Yet, she also interestingly has practical responses to questions such as ‘are dreams real?’, ‘do spirits exist?’, and ‘is there a spiritual reality?’ She says:

Does it matter whether the journey comes from a waking dream, the unconscious in symbolic representation, or a nonordinary parallel world? Who cares, as long as the information (whether metaphorical or literal) gained from a shamanic journey makes positive changes in a person’s life. We must avoid the snares of literalism. Are spirits literally present or are they imaginably present. They are both.⁴⁹

As Tirres acknowledges, this response is significant because it shows Anzaldúa’s interest in finding and offering others new interpretive pathways forward avoiding metaphysical literalism, narrow accounts of spirituality, and unproductive lingering over philosophical tensions. Instead of advocating spirits, dreams, shamanic journeying as either imaginative fictions or objective realities (realism or pluralism), Anzaldúa, according to Tirres, offers a functionalist and pragmatic approach in which what matters most is how these ideas work in practice and how they effect ‘positive changes in a person’s life.’⁵⁰ In other words, Tirres suggests that a strong case can be made for the centrality of praxis in Anzaldúa’s concept of spirituality and spiritual activism.⁵¹ He states, “Although ontological musings about the reality of spirits pepper many of her writings, in *Light in the Dark* one can see a clear pattern emerge in her line of thinking that culminates in the primacy of praxis.” He goes on to argue that “Anzaldúa’s spiritual activism points to a more functionalist and pragmatic approach to spirituality...[a] spirituality that is concerned with the *effects* of spirituality rather than its primary *causes*.”⁵²

⁴⁹Ibid. p. 59.

⁵⁰Tirres, Christopher D. 'Spiritual Realities and Spiritual Activism: Assessing Gloria Anzaldúa's *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro*'. p. 59.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid. p. 60.

Thus, Anzaldúa's spiritual activism is more concerned with effecting positive social change than ascribing to spiritual realism or pluralism. She says that *el conocimiento* "pushes into engaging the spirit in confronting social sickness with new tools and practices whose goal is to effect a shift."⁵³ Praxis is central to Anzaldúa's conceptualization of spirituality and Spirit-in-the-world. Like Tirres, I see the significance of this shift in her writing, acknowledging the functionalist and pragmatic account in her spiritual vision and practice. And this thesis will look at previously unrecognized themes and creative ways spiritual activism can implement this social change via a new epistemology of the heart, ethics of the environment, and ontology of planetary citizenry. As Tirres reiterates, "Let us focus instead on how the spiritual journey can heal us and our world. And let us begin that journey by widening our perception of the world and transforming it through out creative actions."⁵⁴ Spiritual activism is first and foremost a call to action. Its purpose lies not in supporting spiritual realism, but in inspiring and transforming our world through praxis and practical action, imagining and acting in a world in which we are all metaphysically connected. This thesis and its subsequent chapters seek to show the creative ways spiritual can effect positive social change.

Furthermore, Anzaldúa argues that we need a radically inclusionary politics⁵⁵, one that considers communal, social, political, and global goals and injustices in (re)constructing individual and collective identity-formations. The concept of spiritual activism in Anzaldúa postulates a well-defined, philosophical, critical, and pragmatically-based embodied spiritualism which marries personal or self-identity with social and political awareness and activism. I will

⁵³Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality*. p. 19.

⁵⁴Tirres, Christopher D. 'Spiritual Realities and Spiritual Activism: Assessing Gloria Anzaldúa's *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro*'. p. 63.

⁵⁵Anzaldúa, Gloria and AnaLouise Keating. *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*. New York: Routledge, 2002. p. 18-9.

argue that spiritual activism's primary objective is bringing about and instantiating positive, substantial, and ever-lasting social change. Because of this, it demands further scholarly research and attention in an increasingly interconnected, interdependent, globalized, and unjust world.

Anzaldúa's spiritual activism, when used more specifically and analyzed more critically, opens new avenues of critique of an ever-growing capitalistic and neocolonial globalization, which risk the economic and environmental sustainability and survival of everyone on the planet. This current state of global affairs demands a revolutionary means of transformation, which demands radically new theoretical frameworks for practical action. Problems such as rampant environmental degradation, climate change, and neocolonial globalization—which Anzaldúa sees as the growing disparity and inequality between First World and Third World nations—exploit the natural environment and its resources from developing nations for the benefit of the politically-motivated and financially-able few within developed nations, neglecting responsibility to the global populous. These exploitative trends demand our collective attention and action. Similarly, deforestation, habitat loss due to animal-, mono-, and industrial-agricultural systems, and climate change scratch the surface of some of the ill effects of the continued degradation of the natural environment for economic, capital, and political gain. Neocolonial globalization's ruthless neo-capitalism deepens the economic and political divide between the haves and have-nots and accelerates damage to our environment.⁵⁶

The emergence of such an interconnected and unjust geopolitical system requires a fundamental change in the ways in we relate to one another, animals, and the environment. The growing disparity between First World and Third or developed and developing nations in wealth, resources, land, political economy, etc. reveals an exploitative, unbalanced, and dysfunctional

⁵⁶ "Neocolonialism." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, www.iep.utm.edu/neocolon/#Hb.

geopolitical system, which increases rather than decreases the gap between the rich and the poor countries of the world. And Anzaldúa articulates that we, in the 21st century as a global community, need to address these severe harms and injustices which have and will negatively affect and harm everyone on the planet in today's increasingly neocolonialized situation.

Spiritual activism, according to Anzaldúa, asks us to foundationally question and change our metaphysical fundamental outlooks and worldviews when it comes to identity, reality, nature, and spirituality. Spiritual activism asks us to search for inner wholeness and integration through healing in order to better our social condition. As Michelle Corbin notes, Anzaldúa's spiritual activism is one that is committed to a deeper understanding of and reverence for the human world and is a form of spirituality that holds justice and peace as the most central practice and concern.⁵⁷ In this way, social activism is synthesized with a spiritual vision in which we recognize difference, focus on our commonalities, and either sink or swim together, as *one* human race.⁵⁸

Likewise, other thinkers have importantly noted the way Anzaldúa's later works shift away from just an 'ethnic frame of reference' such as with *Borderlands* and 'la mestiza consciousness'. This shift demonstrates Anzaldúa's ever-evolving philosophy and growing concern for global, political, and spiritual issues. As Martina Koegeler-Abdi suggests, her later works focus on the globalized condition of oppression and its webs of power, acknowledging the central role of spirituality and social activism in Anzaldúa's writings and legacy, suggesting that more work needs to be done to understand the spiritual implications of her theories.⁵⁹ My

⁵⁷Corbin, Michelle. "Facing Our Dragons: Spiritual Activism, Psychedelic Mysticism and the Pursuit of Opposition." *Human Architecture* 4 (2006): 239.

⁵⁸Ibid. p. 240.

⁵⁹See Koegeler-Abdi, Martina. "Shifting Subjectivities: Mestizas, Nepantleras, and Gloria Anzaldúa's Legacy." *MELUS* 38, no. 2 (2013): 71-88.

research will attempt to deepen and expand on our understanding of Anzaldúa's notion of spiritual activism and some of its un(der)-explored, un(der)-developed, or un(der)-lying themes and ideas—its new epistemology of the heart, ethics of the environment, and ontology of world or planetary citizenry. I argue that these underlying themes and ideas help us to foster the positive, substantial, and ever-lasting change our societies deeply need. Similarly, these themes help us better understand the absent literature in the secondary scholarship on Anzaldúa's later work, which gives us a better, clearer, and more comprehensive picture of Anzaldúa's philosophy, especially concerning her spirituality and spiritual activism.

As AnaLouise Keating notes in the preface, "I hope that this material [Light in the Dark] will enable scholars to retrace Anzaldúa's thinking, develop rich analyses and interpretations of Anzaldúa's words, and in other ways build on her work—creating new Anzaldúan theory..."⁶⁰ And it is Keating prescription on which I am writing this thesis: attempting to analyze Anzaldúa's thinking concerning spiritual activism, develop rich interpretations, and build upon spiritual activism's theoretical foundations, implications, and applications. More specifically, I will attempt to excavate Anzaldúa's spiritual activism in order better understand some of its under-lying theoretical tenets and means of personal and social transformation—that it offers us a new epistemology of the heart, ethics of the environment, and ontology of world or planetary citizenry.

⁶⁰Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality*. p. xxviii.

Methods/Statement of Research

This thesis uses several methodological and theoretical frameworks. I employ several qualitative methods: I primarily rely on *narrative* and *phenomenological* research methods.⁶¹ I define or understand the *narrative* account as being able to analyze, incorporate, and utilize personal experience in theory. That is, the narrative account looks at how individuals or groups describe their experiences of a particular aspect or problem of the world. I will use the narrative account to analyze the ways Anzaldúa describes her life experiences and problems of neocolonial globalization. For instance, Anzaldúa regularly describes her experience of the aftermath of 9/11 and its impact on her thinking and life. The narrative account allows me to study the life experiences of both Anzaldúa and myself, including personal history and experience in theorizing new ways of knowing, acting, and being (epistemology-ethics-ontology). The narrative account also lets us see how Anzaldúa herself narrates and theorizes about her changing identity, particularly examining how she attempts to embody the change she experiences. She also provides life experiences to exemplify her points and arguments. She describes the ways in which we can reconstruct our identities through writing, artistic expression, and self-reflection based upon one's personal history or narrative account ("autohistorias"). Next, I read or define the *phenomenological* research method as using experiences themselves to understand identity, reality, and knowledge. I use the phenomenological research method to underscore how it is our experiences themselves that help construct our realities and identities, attempting to understand and use our experiences of the world in order to understand it. Using the phenomenological research method, spiritual activism validates yet questions our phenomenological experiences of race, sex, gender, culture, etc. in order to understand and

⁶¹Ibid. p. 187.

transcend the cultural, national, racial, spatial, class, etc. boundaries, borders, and identity-categories which support neocolonial or oppressive power structures. Because of this, I utilize a phenomenological research method in understanding the ways traditional categories of identity experience support oppressive power structures such as neocolonialism. The phenomenological research method allows me to analyze and interpret the life experiences of Anzaldúa the way she describes them, interpreting the ways she describes and experiences what it means to be a spiritual activist and the ways to positive change.

I will also mainly draw from the *philosophical* discipline as it allows me to address the theoretical components, ideas, and terminology needed to understand and unpack spiritual activism and other related concepts. For example, I will use philosophical terms and concepts such as epistemology, ethics, and ontology to understand and read Anzaldúa's work—interpreting her work as using, incorporating, and applying these concepts that have been developed within the philosophical tradition. In particular, I will use a *feminist methodology*, which I understand to be a methodology stemming from a feminist standpoint. Although feminist methodology is varied, I focus on and utilize a few common characteristics within feminist methodology including the bringing about of social change, displaying human diversity, and acknowledging the researcher's position. Feminist methodology allows me to give voice to, validate, and understand spirituality, emotionality, and personal history as a means of epistemology in Anzaldúan philosophy. It allows me to read spiritual activism as attempting to facilitate positive social change while acknowledging the corporeality of the reader and inherent diversity and difference in people. It will also allow me to retrieve, validate, and utilize some indigenous and ancient spirituality of which Anzaldúa strongly draws from, allowing new forms

of epistemology to take place. I therefore heavily rely on some concepts and terms produced by the philosophical discipline to unravel and analyze the notion of spiritual activism.

Similarly, I make use of *critical theory*, which I understand to be explicitly using theory in an attempt to better our social condition and lives. Critical theory allows me to direct spiritual activism's goals to exposing, analyzing, and recognizing 21st century problems such as the epistemic injustice concerning spirituality, rampant environmental degradation and its environmental consequences, and neocolonial globalization. Critical theory enables me to evaluate the inadequate study and representation of spirituality and emotionality as forms of epistemology in modern academia and theory, as well as trace the role of spirituality in Anzaldúa's overall philosophy. Critical theory critiques and addresses the unjust and exploitative structure of neocolonialism and its globalization, which has detrimental effects on social justice and environmental, agricultural, ecological, and economic sustainability. Furthermore, the use of critical theory and its directive of bettering our contemporary social condition is a foundational aspect of spiritual activism in that they both aim to recognize and better our current social situation. Spiritual activism uses critical theory because spiritual activism attempts to identify current social justice issues and transform underlying structure in order to create a positive, substantial, and ever-lasting social change.

In addition, I will use both *case study* and *grounded theory* methods.⁶² *Case study* methods work with qualitative and narrative research methods because they focus on an individual or small group of people, resulting in narrative descriptions of behavior and experiences, attempting to provide insight into how individuals and groups understand aspects of our world. The *grounded theory* methodology is the inductive and systematic methodology

⁶²Ibid.

involving the construction of theory through methodic gathering and analysis of data. I construct a grounded theory of spiritual activism through my textual analysis of Anzaldúa's *Light in the Dark* (*Luz en lo Oscuro*). From this, I use grounded theory as I attempt to analyze, explain, and build upon the notion of spiritual activism from my textual analysis. I construct a grounded theory of spiritual activism which systematizes, amalgamates, and incorporates other textual data and evidence from relevant secondary sources and Anzaldúa's later corpus of work, resulting in an epistemological-ethical-ontological matrix of which I have attempted to construct from my analysis. The case study approach allows me to focus on Anzaldúa's particular text *Luz en la Oscuro* (*Light in the Dark*) as my main case study that supports my grounded theory. I focus my narrative descriptions on Anzaldúa and the ways she both exemplifies and argues for spiritual activism.

Spiritual activism also demands that we shift our attention to *transformative* and *pragmatic* frameworks and methodologies which include transcending personal and collective values and identity-categories in order to establish a positive social change. The *transformative* view, although not well-defined, is the belief that research methods do not fit marginalized individuals. This model allows me to illustrate how subjectivities of self and global identities can change, deconstruct, and reconstruct. Anzaldúa's spirituality heavily depend upon transformative models because Anzaldúa's goal is to construct new identity-formations and ways of being which do not propagate and sustain power or oppressive structures such as class. Anzaldúa's premise relies on our ability to change and transform our identities, identity-formations, and ways of being. The *pragmatism* model is a worldview in which a framework of beliefs and ideas develops through the way a person interprets and interacts with the world. In other words, pragmatism discovers truth and implements action guided by interactions with the physical

world. Thus, truth or action is used or prescribed only insofar as it practically works in the world. Pragmatism also attempts to address contemporary problems so that we can enhance our lives. Pragmatism helps me to address real-world issues⁶³ in order to foster positive social change. These methodologies entail that individuals can reconstruct their cultural, social, racial, and class identities while addressing real-world and current social and political issues. Therefore, I hold that spiritual activism's phenomenology enacts transformational ways in which we can re-conceptualize the human being in order to manifest positive, substantial, and ever-lasting social change.

Literature Review:

A New Epistemology of the Heart (Chapter Two)

Spiritual Activism

Most importantly, Anzaldúa used this term to describe her visionary, experimentally-based epistemology, ethics, and metaphysics.⁶⁴ Spiritual activism posits a metaphysic of interconnectedness which deconstructs binary modes of thinking such as subject/object, us/them, and self/world. Yet, it requires concrete action designed to transform the existing social order. Spiritual activism also acknowledges differences in identity-formation, but it insists upon focusing on commonalities as the impetus for social change. Spiritual activism, thus, sees the personal and self-transformation as intimately tied to political and global transformation and is the foundation on which I will build on in this thesis. In order to transform the world, spiritual

⁶³Creswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches 4th ed.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2014. p. 6.

⁶⁴Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality.* p. 246.

activism suggests we must first change ourselves, our ways of knowing, our actions, and our identities.

More specifically, spiritual activism offers a new epistemology of the heart. As the heart symbolizes many things to many cultures, I will focus on two major ways in which we can understand and order how Anzaldúa and her spiritual activism offer a new epistemology of the heart: (i) the emotional heart and (ii) the spiritual/energetic heart. (i) The emotional heart represents one's feelings or one's emotionality, and the openness to one's feelings and emotions. It determines that we ought to consider emotionality and feelings when we attempt to understand, theorize, and transform ourselves, others, and the planet. It is what allows us to deepen our feelings and generate the emotional power needed to authentically transform oneself, others, and our societies, and it directly attacks the epistemic injustices which say that these other ways of knowing are inferior. According to Anzaldúa, we need the openness to emotionality and feeling if we are to empathize with others and positively transform our lives.

Secondly, Anzaldúa theorizes a (ii) spiritual/energetic heart in which she declares the ways our hearts can empathetically and spiritually connect to and link with others. As I draw out this theoretical implication, new scientific understandings about the energetic heart suggest that it plays a vital role in receiving and communicating emotional and biological information to the brain⁶⁵, as well as the means in which we can empathize with others. For Anzaldúa, the spiritual heart is what connects us via an empathetic connection with others, nature, planet, etc. These recent scientific discoveries infer that the bioelectric, energetic heart actually creates its own bioenergetics or bioelectrical field which may be responsible for other ways of knowing, sensing,

⁶⁵See McCraty, Rollin. "The Energetic Heart: Bioelectromagnetic Communication within and between People."

intuiting, and communicating with others.⁶⁶ Although Anzaldúa does not directly mention these findings, I believe these new discoveries share a strong relationship with Anzaldúa because they both posit other ways in which we can know, sense, heal, intuit and incite an empathetic connection with others, as Anzaldúa artistically describes through her writing. Other ways of knowing, sensing, communicating are vital for understanding spiritual activism and its means of transformation because it moves us away from oppressive structures of knowledge-production which propagate globally oppressive systems to more inclusive, harmonious, and sustainable communities. Spiritual activism thus demands that we mediate other ways of knowing, sensing, and intuiting which can foster positive social change. Moreover, incorporating these new understandings of the heart and its role in discovering self-knowledge, intuition, sensing, healing, and empathizing proves to be a salient way in which we activate spiritual activism and its other ways of knowing in order to heal our individual identities and deconstruct globally oppressive structures.

Nepantl(er)a

Nepantla is a Nahuatl word meaning the “in-between space”. This term reflects Anzaldúa’s post-*Borderland* theory of liminality, process, and potentiality for change. For Anzaldúa, it represents the temporal, spatial, psychic, and intellectual points of crisis. The concept of Nepantla helps us to imagine the in-between spaces of what we consider to be our identity, epistemology, ethics, politics, ontology, aesthetics, and metaphysics. Nepantleras are unique kinds of mediators who live in multiple worlds. They are threshold people, using their

⁶⁶Ibid.

transformed experience to establish holistic relational theories which transform the ways we live.⁶⁷

Moreover, the concept of Nepantl(er)a is important for discussing and understanding spiritual activism and a new epistemology of the heart. Nepantla helps me to unpack the emotional heart because it allows us to theorize *with* affectivity, inhabiting the places and connections between our feelings, our minds, our consciousness, our bodies, others, animals, and the natural environment. Nepantla ideology also incorporates new ways of knowing, suggesting an acceptance with recent findings of the energetic or spiritual heart, which give us new ways in which we communicate with our bodies, our brains, other hearts, and possibly, the planet. Furthermore, the concept of Napantla is vital to the epistemology of the heart when we consider how the heart interacts with our minds, bodies, and spirit in Anzaldúa's works and how it can manifest transformation, acknowledging the heart as its own phenomenological category and means of epistemology.

El Conocimiento

El conocimiento is the Spanish word for "knowledge". While continuing to build upon her post-*Borderlands* theories, Anzaldúa's conocimiento stands for connectionist modes of thinking and being. El conocimiento pushes us to deepen our perceptual realities to develop radically inclusionary possibilities. El conocimiento is the emotional and intellectual faculty which gives us the ability to perceive different realities and different ways of knowing. In this way, it is what fuels and guides the self/global transformation process and new epistemology of the heart described by spiritual activists.

⁶⁷Ibid.p. 245.

El conocimiento furthermore plays a pivotal role in understanding a new epistemology of the heart. The (i) emotional heart heavily depends on el conocimiento for reflecting on and generating new ways of feeling and theorizing with emotionality, feeling, and affectivity. It requires that we deeply listen to our emotions and feelings if we are to self-heal, transform, and heal our society. Likewise, a new scientific understanding of the (ii) energetic or spiritual heart engages in new conocimientos that can expand our psyches, consciousness, and spiritual understanding of our heart's potential and role in communicating bodily, emotional, and intuitive information within oneself and with others. Consequently, the concept of el conocimiento plays an important function in the development and comprehension of spiritual activism and its relation to the new epistemology of the heart because it allows us to access deeper, emotional, and spiritual knowledge that are not just associated with mind, intellect, or reason, expanding on other ways we can sense, intuit, and communicate and empathetically connect with others.

A New Ethics of the Environment (Chapter Three)

Spiritual Activism

Spiritual activism, upon close investigation, also offers a new ethics of the natural space and environment. As the land, environment, and nature are highly stressed in spiritual activism and Anzaldúa's writings, I will focus on two major ways or categories in which spiritual activism and Anzaldúa offer a new ethics of natural environment: it recognizes (i) neocolonial globalization that rampantly increases environmental degradation and creates exploitative, oppressive structures of natural space and (ii) permaculture ideologies and practices because of their profound ability to heal and create environmental, ecological, and agricultural transformation and sustainability.

Anzaldúa focuses on and acknowledges that the (i) increasing globalization of neocolonialism spurs rampant environmental degradation by economically, politically and environmentally exploiting developing or Third World nations and appropriating land use and resources for western and First World production. Spiritual activism thus demands a new environmental ethic by the way we relate to our natural surroundings given neocolonialism's accelerating global effects and dire environmental consequences. It also demands that we rethink our current industrial agricultural practices because of how unsustainable they are and how much they degrade the land. Spiritual activism recognizes this need, and I suggest it would theoretically lead to and adopt (ii) permaculture practices and ideologies, which attempt to work with nature in sustainable and mutually beneficial ways.

Like the heart, humanity should have a deep spiritual connection with nature, natural space, and the environment. Spiritual activism posits a metaphysic of interconnectedness which transcends a new way of treating and working with the natural environment, primarily in terms of sustainable ecology and agriculture. I suggest that spiritual activism's theoretical implication intuits a kind of permaculture methodology and ideology in which we attempt to work with the natural environment in the most permanent, sustainable, and least resistant and destructive way possible. This foundation suggests a partnership with the natural space and environment in which we attempt 'to work with nature' in permanently sustainable ways—i.e. permaculture, a type of agriculture in which we search for the most efficient, effective, and sustainable means of agricultural production.

Coyolxauhqui Imperative

The Coyolxauhqui Imperative (C.I.), too, is tethered to a new ethics of the environment because self and collective healing is essential to our relationship with the natural environment and spiritual activism. C.I. theory, I suggest, forces the individual and humanity as a whole to seriously contemplate its relationship with the natural environment. Climate change, uncontrollable environmental degradation for capitalistic production, and ecological instability are social, environmental, and global concerns because they now have the ability to (negatively) affect everyone on the planet. According to Anzaldúa, these grave issues demonstrate that we have spiritually and metaphysically severed our connection with natural space, the environment, the planet, and the universe which surrounds us. Spiritual activism outlines an imperative to view the planet and natural environment as ecologically and energetically connected as opposed to geographically, culturally, socially, and politically dismembered. The imaginary boundaries of nationalism and its borderlands and environmental exploitation for capital production and political power (neocolonialism) detail how western-identity formations metaphysically separate themselves from others, with the natural space around us and the natural environment of others. Thus, C.I., too, sees these unnatural boundaries and relationships to nature as fundamentally spiritual and identity-problems that plague self and global identity, health, and balance.

C.I. is the theoretical model in which we can individually and collectively heal our primal and spiritual connection to nature and the natural planet, rekindling our connection to natural space, environment, and the planet, attempting to heal and achieve wholeness within ourselves. This process toward wholeness redesigns our identity-formations as those that feel profoundly connected to the natural environment and planet Earth. C.I. and its process of wholeness, deconstruction and reconstruction, contribute to healing ourselves and reestablishing a

connection to nature which consequently creates a positive social change through environmental, agricultural, and ecological sustainability.

Nepantl(er)a

Nepantla also plays an important role in understanding our spatial, ecological, and spiritual relationship to the natural environment. Nepantla methodology aids in actively combating environmental degradation and exploitation by (re)imagining our fundamental relationship with the natural space and environment. Imagining the spaces in which our social, political, economic, and cultural lives intersect with the natural environment can initiate insight into the ways we are interconnected and the ways in which fragmentation, exploitation, and inequality grow. It also critiques the ways in which neocolonialism and western identity-formations construct fragmented senses of self based on geographical, national, cultural, racial, sexual, and class barriers.

Nepantla ideology and methodology also helps me to unpack the value of a metaphysical interconnectedness that is tied to the natural environment. Spiritual activism's embodied praxis shows how our western cultural and spatial environment condition us to feel and theorize as if we are a metaphysically defined, separate, and distinct species that does not share an ecological, spiritual, or collective identity with others, animals, nature, and the planet. In other words, western culture constructs identity-formations that do not see themselves as tied to or interconnected with nature or their natural environments and spaces. From within Anzaldúa's philosophy, this disconnection demands a need to spiritually reconnect with nature and the planet by inhabiting and reimagining the connection in-between spaces betwixt us and the environmental world, e.g. with social justice and permaculture sustainability. Nepantla

recognizes the benefits and positive values we achieve in viewing the world as metaphysically interconnected, seeing the world as connected, instead of fractionalized or disconnected, prompting individuals to see him- or her-self as part of a larger natural environment and space, nature, and planet itself. Furthermore, Napanla is a vital component to spiritual activism in Anzaldúa's later works because it allows us to (re)imagine the spaces in between our individual identity and the natural environment, prompting us to view human life as intimately connected to the natural environment.

El Conocimiento

El conocimiento also plays a pivotal role in the developing a new ethic of the natural environment. Anzaldúa must implement el conocimiento to explicate the ways we have been oppressed, subjugated, and harmed by western culture, ideology, and practice. These insights depict neocolonial globalization and condemn its consequences of voracious consumerism, environmental degradation, and global inequality. From this, el conocimiento allows us to hypothesize new ways of relating to the land consisting of a metaphysical interconnection.

Consequently, the concept of el conocimiento plays an important function in the development of new environmental values and ethics. Through el conocimiento we can develop the view that the way we treat the environment is spiritually emblematic of how we view and treat ourselves. Global environmental degradation, in this way, is tied to the internalized psychical and emotional pain and fragmentation of the individual subject. Causing harm to others, animals, and the natural environment, is the manifestation of this inner fragmentation, suffering, and disconnection from our el conocimiento or connectionist faculty. El conocimiento is thus intimately connected with spiritual activism in that it allows us to extend how we see

ourselves and expand on the methods in which we interact with the natural environment. Furthermore, it is el conocimiento that allows us to indirectly make the connection between the destructive global condition that manifests unsustainable production, agriculture, and ecology and a permaculture ideology and practice that attempts to work with nature in order to build ecological and agricultural sustainability with the natural environment, recognizing both problem and solution, strengthening our connectionist goal of healing and instantiating positive social change.

A New Ontology of Planetary Citizenry (Chapter Four)

Spiritual Activism

Spiritual activism offers a new interconnected ontology that creates innovative categories of identity and identity-formations. The notion of establishing a global community and identity is foundational to spiritual activism, as it attempts to focus on commonalities while acknowledging and respecting the differences among cultures and social systems. It views human experience as means of attaining commonality and bases its actions upon this premise. I contend that it postulates several relationships and themes that are fruitful for reflecting, theorizing, and describing what Anzaldúa calls a new planetary or world citizenry: (i) the link between self and global transformation and (ii) the centralizing of the notions of balance and healing in developing interdependent, harmonious, and peaceful societies, communities, and individual identity-formations.

Anzaldúa focuses on the ways in which (i) self-transformation is connected to and leads to global transformation. Global transformation cannot be realized without working on the spiritual, mental, emotional health of the individual subject. What's more, the interactions

between self-global transformations analyze the modes of oppression depicted by a capitalistic neocolonial geopolitical system. Secondly, (ii) the notions of balance and healing are central to establishing interdependent communities and identity-formations. The connection between self and global transformation suggests that in order for interdependent and harmonious communities and people to exist and flourish and new identity-formations to emerge, there must be a balanced relationship within the individual, acknowledging individual health, independence, and self-determination in terms of personal, emotional, and psychical well-being, and the community's environmental, agricultural, socio-political, and economic sustainability. Furthermore, Anzaldúa and her spiritual activism acknowledge and attempt to change neocolonialism and its rampant consumerist model, which creates exploitative, unjust, and economically dependent social systems that do not foster self or collective liberation or sustainable living practices.

Furthermore, spiritual activism's holistic framework allows us to construct identities in multiple ways that extend beyond social, racial, sexual, national, and class distinctions and categories, describing the ways in which self-transformation leads to global transformation. It is an integrated model that allows us to theorize a new epistemological-ethical-ontology matrix in order to construct a new world or planetary citizenry in which one sees him- or her-self as intimately tied to others, the natural environment, the planet, and global transformation. In order to make this transition, individual and collective healing and balance are vital components in transforming our current society into a more positive, balanced, healthy, and utopystic social order because one moves beyond traditional and exploitative ontological categories which cause internal and external suffering, separate ourselves from others, and sustain global and resource inequality.

Coyolxauhqui Imperative

C.I. is important in conceptualizing a new world or planetary citizenry because, according to Anzaldúa, new categorical identities require painfully dismembering past identity-formations in order to concretize new modes of being. This new world and planetary citizenry thus necessitates new identities; it extends notions of self-identity that consider the health and lives of animals, everyone on the planet, and the planet itself. In order to do this however, the process of C.I. requires us to reevaluate the dichotomy of self/global identities. It also requires us to rethink the relationship between individual and collective balance, healing, and interdependence, which incites the painful process of recognizing the inner (personal) and outer (structural) fragmentation and separateness in our thinking, being, and relating to others.

Likewise, C.I., according to Anzaldúa, is vital for amalgamating and traversing the spaces and borders between body, mind, spirit, and heart so that we can heal, individually and collectively. Contemplating the spaces and liminal boundaries between our individual bodies, minds, spirits, and hearts and their interrelation toward others allows us to consider a holistic conceptualization and understanding of what it means to be human and a citizen of the world, not just of one's culture, nation, ethnicity, race, sex, class, environmental region, etc. Furthermore, C.I. and its process of deconstruction and reconstruction could play a crucial part in understanding and implementing spiritual activism and its epistemological-ethical-ontological matrix in order to deconstruct western identity-formations and construct a positive, substantial, and ever-lasting social change.

New Tribalism

Anzaldúa's new tribalism attempts to build upon one of her earlier concepts called *El Mundo Zurdo*⁶⁸ and reconcile criticisms of *Borderlands* which perceived her theory as narrow nationalism or too essentializing. New tribalism is in an attempt to create alliance-based approaches to identity-formations while offering a profound alternative to separatism and assimilation.⁶⁹ Anzaldúa's new tribalism has the theoretical framework needed to develop the concept of world or planetary citizenry, which embraces difference and focuses upon the commonality between all cultures, societies, and communities in order to manifest positive, substantial, and ever-lasting change.

Anzaldúa's new tribalism effectively helps in the construction of building a new self/global/planetary (e.g. world citizen) identity and community. It allows us to establish a new metaphysic/ontology of interconnectedness which supports world or planetary citizenry, viewing oneself as metaphysically connected to others, animals, and the planet. This concept, when working together with others, could help reconstruct identity through self/global/planet healing in order to achieve harmonious balances on multi-levels, e.g. individual health, peace between communities and cultures, sustainability with the natural environment, responsibility to the global community, etc. Furthermore, new tribalism is the groundwork on which a new world or planetary citizen could materialize. It embraces others through relational or differential identity-formations in order to envisage ways in which we can *all* heal as a global community. And thus, new tribalism is the theoretical apparatus on which spiritual activism builds an ontology and

⁶⁸This is the Spanish word for "The Left-Handed World," which is one of Gloria Anzaldúa's earliest concepts. It attempts to create an inherently inclusionary community of different and variant ethnic, racial, cultural, etc. backgrounds and groups.

⁶⁹Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. p. 245-6.

metaphysic of interconnectedness with others, animals, and the natural planet itself, and it is what could allow us to reconstruct our identities to those that propagate positive, substantial, and ever-lasting social change instead of sustaining oppressive power structures and social injustice.

Nos/otras

This is another fundamental and transformative theory by Anzaldúa which posits an identity of intersubjectivity. *Nos*, which in Spanish translates to “us”, and *otras*, which translates to “them”, represents the breaking of this dichotomy by combining each pronoun into a collective “we”, i.e. *nos/otras*. It holds the promise of self-healing and bridging the gap between the “us” and “them” (subject-object) dualistic mentality. However, it does not disregard difference or assume assimilation—which is why the dash remains. Like new tribalism, it utilizes relational or differential identity-formations to dialogically recognize previously unrecognized commonalities and connections, e.g. that we are spiritually and metaphysically interconnected and a part of larger living social, natural, and planetary systems. Anzaldúa’s *nos/otras* thus offers alternatives to binary self-other assemblages that present a new philosophy and praxis of communicating and building bridges between self, other, and planet.⁷⁰

The *nos/otras* framework could thus be crucial for establishing a new ontology of a world citizen: the *nos/otras* intersubjective structure allows us to perceive the self (“us”) and global (“them”) dichotomy in new non-dualistic ways; *nos/otras* proposes that we must develop a degree of balance and foster healing so that we can establish a healthy and sustainable level of interdependence among nations, cultures, and communities. In this way, too, we see the strong ways in which self influences and becomes influenced by the larger social context, supporting

⁷⁰Ibid. p. 246.

the idea that self and global transformation are intimately interconnected. Moreover, nos/otras could play a salient function in developing world or planetary citizenry and hence contributes greatly to spiritual activism and its directives of establishing positive, substantial, and everlasting social change.

CHAPTER TWO: A NEW EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE HEART

Love swells in your chest and shoots out of your heart chakra, linking you to everyone/everything—the aboriginal in Australia, the crow in the forest, the vast Pacific Ocean. You share a category of identity wider than any social position or racial label. This *conocimiento* motivates you to work actively to see that no harm comes to people, animals, ocean—to take up spiritual activism and the work of healing.

-Gloria Anzaldúa, “Now Let Us Shift”

Introduction

Spiritual activism gives us a new epistemology of the heart: (i) the emotional heart and (ii) the spiritual/energetic heart. Anzaldúa acknowledges the epistemic injustice of emotional and spiritual epistemological oppression stemming from western academia and western modes of thinking. Scientific rationality’s hegemonic dominance in western ideology and academia has understood spirituality, emotionality, and personal history as distinct and inferior ways of knowing in contrast to the pure abstraction of intellectual and scientific reasoning. Avoiding emotionality, feeling, and affectivity in theorizing represses the ways in which we can know, act, and relate to the world according to Anzaldúa, and if we are repressed in the ways in which we can know, act and relate to the world, then we cannot positively transform ourselves or our communities.

Spiritual activism furthermore requires both intellectual and emotional intelligence in order to create a positive social change. Emotional intelligence can be partially understood and described as the *openness* to emotionality itself, experiencing and theorizing with the vast range of emotional expressions and experiences such as compassion, love, empathy, as well as pain, fear, and anger. This openness to emotionality, feeling, empathy, and experience is an essential component to theorizing and self-transformation according to Anzaldúa and thus pivotal in the ways in which we understand her spirituality and new epistemology.

Throughout Anzaldúa's works, she often addresses the proverbial heart and its role in spiritual activism. This chapter attempts to understand and unpack what Anzaldúa means when she regularly calls on and employs the "heart's intelligence" or "heart with reason," realizing that feeling and emotionality should be married with intellect and reason in order to positively transform ourselves and our societies. Intellect or mind is not enough to support positive social change according to Anzaldúa. She acknowledges that our biological and metaphorical heart possesses other means of knowing and reasoning, and hence, it has its own epistemology which merits academic discourse. Likewise, her philosophy of the heart plays an integral part in understanding her spiritual activism, its mean of epistemology, and creating positive social change.

This chapter will be a thorough investigation of the various uses and ideas of the heart of which Anzaldúa regularly employs. She acknowledges the "heart" of our many experiences, such as the heart of our emotions, sexual experience, life force, and spirituality. I am attempting to do the work of establishing a comprehensively and explicitly stated idea of what Anzaldúa means by 'heart' and expand upon her many uses of it as its own epistemological structure. I am doing the ordering work of stitching together the various ways she employs and describes the heart's intelligence and its new epistemology. For example, Anzaldúa saliently describes her theory of spiritual activism and its relation to the knowledge or epistemology of the heart, which contributes to our intuitions and openness to new ways of sensing and being. Anzaldúa asserts:

This visual intuitive sense, like the intellect of heart and gut, reveals a discourse of signs, images, feelings, words that, once decoded, carry the power to startle you out of tunnel vision and habitual patterns of thought. The snake is a symbol of awakening consciousness—the potential of knowing within, an awareness and intelligence not grasped by logical thought. Often nature provokes una 'aja' or 'conocimiento', on that

guides your feet along the path, gives you el animo to dedicate yourself to transforming perceptions of reality, and thus the conditions of life.⁷¹

Here, Anzaldúa illuminates the ways in which an inner awareness, el conocimiento, is partially composed of the “intelligence” or intellect of the heart. Anzaldúa suggests that heart has an epistemology not grounded in logical thought but in intuitive perception, which works in concert with images, feelings, words, thoughts, etc. This new knowledge is supported by the heart’s subjective function in feeling, perceiving, and sensing in new ways. It is also what allows us to interpret or decode the subtle signs of our feelings and thoughts. Anzaldúa’s new epistemology of knowing, sensing, and transforming our worlds, perceptions, conditions, and realities require that we travel inward and allow our inner knowledge and intuitions to surface. She continues: “Intuitive knowing, unmediated by mental constructs—what inner eye, heart, and gut tell you—is the closest you come to direct knowledge (gnosis) of the world, and this experience of reality is partial, too.”⁷² Anzaldúa thus depicts a heart that directly engages in intuitive knowing that is not simply mediated by thoughts or mental constructs. In other words, the heart’s epistemology accesses deeper intuitive feelings which then interact with mind, reason, and mental constructs, allowing us to know, feel, sense, and deepen our understanding of intuitive perception and other ways of knowing. She thinks that this intuitive experience is our direct link to the world and knowledge, not one simply mediated by logical thought, mental constructs, social institutions, or modern science.

Likewise, Anzaldúa asks us to break out of our mental and emotional prisons and deepen the range of perception, enabling us to link inner reflection and vision—the mental, emotional, instinctual, imaginal, spiritual, and subtle bodily awarenesses—with social and political action

⁷¹Ibid. p. 117.

⁷²Ibid. p. 120.

and lived experience to manifest subversive forms of knowledges.⁷³ This demarcates the process of the spiritual activist and spiritual activism, to aim the inner, intuitive, and knowledge of the heart at oppressive social and political structures, to transcend the multi-leveled structure of the world, e.g. your surroundings, bodily sensations and responses, intuitive takes, emotional reactions to other people and theirs to you.⁷⁴ And it is this heart's epistemology that allows us to recognize these profound intuitive and subversive forms of knowledges which aim at deconstructing oppressive power structures and creating peace and ever-lasting change.

Furthermore, because Anzaldúa has many uses and ideas of what she means by heart, I will frame this chapter as providing a heuristic and multi-faceted account of what the heart can symbolize and affect, primarily illustrating the heart as a new biophysical and symbolic means of knowing, intuiting, and sensing the world. Moreover, the heart is an interesting symbolic and biological organ, and scholarly research is needed. Although the heart's epistemology is not directly Anzaldúa's project, I frame and suggest that Anzaldúa implicitly provides a new epistemology of the heart, which influences positive social change. I wish to highlight her un(der)-developed, un(der)-explored theory surrounding her ideas about the heart and its role in spirituality. I aim to make Anzaldúa's ideas about the heart more apparent to her readers and general scholarship and to show its role in spiritual activism, primarily in the way that the spiritual activist theorizes with and utilizes this new epistemology of the heart in order to transform him or her-self, others, and the global system, thereby affecting positive social change via the different ways we can use, feel, and think with the heart and its intelligence.

Furthermore, my goal is to make Anzaldúa's notion of the heart more pronounced, clear, and explicit for the general reader and to develop this theme which has been overlooked in the

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

secondary scholarship on Anzaldúa. Throughout my research, I have found and arranged Anzaldúa's ideas about the heart in these two broad categories: (i) the emotional heart and (ii) the energetic/spiritual heart. I argue the heart, its multi-faceted meanings and heuristic capabilities, should be more clearly analyzed and enmeshed into Anzaldúa's general theories and ideas. The notion of the heart plays an inescapable role in spiritual activist epistemology, highlighting how transformation, both self and global, requires new ways of feelings, knowing, sensing, intuiting, healing, and communicating.

To situate this chapter and deconstruct Anzaldúa's ideas of the heart, I will quickly describe how I read, organize, and interpret Anzaldúa's new epistemology of the heart. In section (ii) the emotional heart, the heart plays a direct role in Anzaldúa's epistemology and spirituality. That is, emotionality and affectivity, one of the ways Anzaldúa symbolizes the heart, demonstrate the ways in which our feelings are experienced and the ways in which our feelings should instruct reason and other ways of knowing and acting in the world. The emotional heart also symbolizes the process of woundedness and openness, dictating that we must be open to the world in order to be altered by it and that this openness necessarily leads to pain and suffering. Likewise, the emotional heart symbolizes healing and the processes of healing. In order for positive transformation to occur for Anzaldúa, we must be directly involved in the constant process of healing and woundedness symbolized by the emotional heart, allowing ourselves to be painfully altered by the world, using emotionality and healing to transform. And thus the idea of the heart encapsulates our emotionality and affectivity and allows us to use, theorize with, and expand on our deep feelings that lead to empathy and empathetic connection with others, inciting positive social change. Anzaldúa wishes for us to develop an emotionality that is tied with reason and use woundedness, healing, and empathy to positively transform our societies.

In the next section, (ii) the energetic or spiritual heart, according to Anzaldúa, is the symbol for integration or connection with life force; it is what allows us the spiritually connect and enable empathetic connection with others, animals, and the planet. This section serves as a theoretical application of spiritual activism because it incorporates modern science and new scientific findings of which Anzaldúa does not explicitly address. Because Anzaldúa died before this research had surfaced, it is hard to know what her views might have been. However, I suggest Anzaldúa would incorporate and acknowledge this new scientific knowledge regarding the energetic heart, which suggests that the biological heart creates its own bioelectric or energetic field which may be responsible for other ways of knowing, intuiting, sensing, and communicating. I believe these findings support her ideas of the heart and expand the ways in which we can develop new epistemologies. This new heart science is an application of Anzaldúa's new heart epistemology. Hence, in this section, too, I build on and both directly and indirectly apply Anzaldúa's ideas of the heart's intelligence with modern scientific findings.

The Emotional Heart

Many of Anzaldúa's theories incorporates an epistemology that tries to encompass all dimensions of life, both inner—mental, emotional, instinctual, imaginal, spiritual, bodily realms—and outer—social, political, and lived experience.⁷⁵ Anzaldúa attempted to capture the entire essence of what it means to be human, acknowledging parts of ourselves such as the soul or spirit, our emotional selves, and our energetic selves. She tries to draw out the ways in which these forces interact, and how each facet of experience merits its own thinking and metaphysical reality. For example, she describes the Coatlicue state which accesses la facultad, or the ability

⁷⁵Keating, AnaLouise. *Entremundos/Amongworlds: New Perspectives on Gloria E. Anzaldúa*. Springer, 2016. p. 144.

to perceive ‘deeper realities’ and spiritual awareness, perceiving previously unrecognized emotional and spiritual abilities to deepen our experience of reality.⁷⁶ She wishes to use anger and other strong emotions combined with self-reflection and reason to transform our given realities and ideas about reality (the social, imaginal, emotional, political, mental, etc.).⁷⁷

However, Anzaldúa criticizes modern science’s story and recognizes its limitations, challenging us and our theories to move beyond the five senses, to get into subjectivity, the inner life, thoughts, and feelings, and intuition.⁷⁸ She challenges the “skinny little territory” of the spectrum of the physical world and our senses, incorporating dreams, imagination, spiritual experiences, and intuitive feeling.⁷⁹ And buried in all of Anzaldúa’s writing is an inconspicuous, untraced, and previously unrecognized conception of the heart of which plays a pivotal and multi-functional role in the interaction of these experiences and establishing a new epistemology. She importantly characterizes and utilizes the heart and its dynamic symbolism in many ways throughout her book and interviews. She suggests that we’re born into this world to *make* face and heart, our face symbolizing our personality and our hearts representing our soul or spirit.⁸⁰ Anzaldúa’s believed that we are here to create, that spirit is the active process in creating our identities, our personalities, and spiritual understandings. Anzaldúa describes the heart as being able to symbolize and stand for many aspects of our lives and experiences. For instance, she states:

⁷⁶Ibid. p. 225.

⁷⁷Ibid. p. 232.

⁷⁸Anzaldúa, Gloria and AnaLouise Keating. *Interviews = Entrevistas*. New York: Routledge, 2000. p. 18.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid. p. 35. This is also a reference to Anzaldúa second anthology, Anzaldúa, Gloria. See *Making Face, Making Soul = Haciendo Caras : Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color*. 1st ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Foundation Books, 1990.

...a symbol for integration is the heart; it beats. Then you have a heart over there—the sexual heart, when you have an orgasm. When you meditate you set off a third heart. When you can get three synchronized it's wonderful. It's like pure ecstasy... Then, there's a feeling heart [i], and then the spiritual [ii]. I use those three as a symbol. There may even be a fourth heart; I don't know. Can you think of a fourth heart? There could be the beat, the rhythm of the universe.⁸¹

Thus, the heart can function and symbolize much of our experience and reality, depicting the heart that is both center of phenomenal experiences such as sexual orgasm and emotionality and the means of connecting those experiences together, a symbol for integration—i.e. the spiritual heart. Likewise, her questioning and incorporation of a possible fourth heart depicts the ways in which it can function as an important and useful heuristic—a metaphor, concept, or feeling which can help describe and expand on reality and our experiences of reality. To Anzaldúa, the concept of the heart is versatile and multi-functional and can incite emotional, intellectual, and metaphysical curiosity.

For example, in chapter four, “Geographies of Selves,” Anzaldúa connects heart with intellect, reason, and thinking. Anzaldúa advocates that we need to practice and engage in deep feeling, intimate listening, and empathizing with ourselves, confrontation, and others. She claims that:

We [nepantleras] try to contemplate others' sufferings from 'safe' places without engaging them with deep feeling. However, to really listen, we must put our corazones y razones (feeling and intellect) in our manos and extend them to others in empathetic efforts to understand. Intimate listening is more productive than detached self-interest, winning arguments, or sticking to pet theories.⁸²

Anzaldúa articulates that we must engage others and confrontation with deep listening symbolized by our hearts and emotionality. We must empathize with the Other, disrupting neat categories of race, ethnicity, nationalism, class, and sex. Anzaldúa suggests that we need to

⁸¹Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. p. 68-9.

⁸²Ibid. p. 78-9.

integrate our hearts and feelings with our intellect and theorizing, insinuating that reason or intellect stitched with empathetic connection is key to understand and listen to others and better our social lives and relationship with others. This intimate and empathetic listening, according to Anzaldúa, is far more productive for transformation than current academic institutional structures which include winning arguments, academic prestige, and sticking with the theoretical status-quo. Deep listening and engaging with others on an empathetic and emotional level is fundamental in rewriting self- and collective-identities and positively changing the current social structure and reality, engaging in deep feeling and empathy tied with reason in order to solve our social and global problems. Yet, this rewiring necessarily leads to pain and suffering. For instance, the Nepantlera's eternal occupation of the liminal spaces between ourselves, others, feeling, and intellect requires internal suffering and pain.

Anzaldúa recognizes that emotional pain and deep feeling are necessary conditions of self-transformation, and hence global transformation. She states:

Navigating the cracks between worlds is difficult and painful, like reconstructing a new life, a new identity. Forced to negotiate the cracks between realities, we learn to navigate the switchback roads between assimilation/acquiescence to the dominant culture and isolation/preservation of our ethnic cultural integrity. But both are necessary for survival and growth. When we adapt to cambio (change), we develop a new set of terms to identify with, new definitions of our academic disciplines...⁸³

Likewise, Anzaldúa describes the nepantlera's process of navigating between worlds as necessarily painful and difficult. Reconstructing new individual and collective identities is painful. Negotiating between old realities and new ones requires a demolition of previously held beliefs, ideas, feelings, and senses of identities. This deconstructive process describes an ever-changing identity-formation and emotional metamorphosis, constantly negotiating our feelings

⁸³Ibid. p. 79.

with our intellect and identities, recognizing that we must ever-adapt to our conditions and circumstances.

However, this is a powerful method which can lead to authentic growth and change according to Anzaldúa, developing a new empathetic and emotional self that embraces others and challenges the larger socio-political structures which cause global oppression, disparity, and injustice. This process is powerful enough to meditate change in both individual and collective identities. Anzaldúa wishes to deconstruct old binaries, emotional patterns, boundaries, and tidy categories of identity such as race, gender, class, and sexuality. Although painful, this shift and shock is the first step into *el conocimiento*, rendering identity malleable and allowing for greater freedom in constructing new identities and developing new emotional patterns and empathetic connections. Indeed, because *la nepantleras* recognize and are always in a state of change, they learn to live in the spaces between our continually changing identities, feelings, and senses of self, embracing and transcending momentary and eternal pain and suffering in order to manifest new positive patterns and modes of being. Nonetheless, it is the understanding and feeling of this deep existential pain that allows one to recognize personal and collective wounds and the extent of the emotional heart, fostering positive change by allowing experiences of deep feeling, intimate listening to others, and empathetic connections to occur. Moreover, it is our emotionality, affectivity, and deep feeling that guides and allows ourselves, others, and the global structures to change and transform.

Another important aspect of Anzaldúa's ideas of heart and emotionality is healing. One cannot stay in a place of woundnesses if one wishes to transform, and thus, the cyclical relationship between transformation and healing emerges. Anzaldúa states, "Our task has always

been to heal the personal and group heridas of body, mind, spirit,”⁸⁴ and she continues to assert that we must assess and repair the damages that our and other groups have done to each other, men to women, women to men, adults to children, races to other races, etc. Healing means using one’s connection to life force (heart) and strength, as wounding demarcates an urgent need for wholeness and integration.⁸⁵ She illumines that “you don’t heal the wound, the wound heals you. First you must recognize and acknowledge la herida. Second, you must ‘intend’ to heal. Then you must fall headlong into that wounding.”⁸⁶ Again, Anzaldúa demonstrates that one must first acknowledge that one is emotionally wounded, separated, fragmented—which is how identity-formations in western culture and ideology are constructed. She then suggests that we intend to heal our wounds, understanding that the wound itself is the means to healing and transformation. The emotional heart, in this way, is the openness to feeling, emotionality, and empathy—the ability to be wounded by our experiences of the world. She asks us to attend to what the body and heart are feeling, to be and feel the dismemberment, disintegration, rupture, psychic and emotional fragmentation that leads to a dialogue with the wound, emphasizing the emotional heart’s means of change—to engage in openness, emotional wounding and healing, and thus, transformation.

And this process is the direct work of the spiritual activist and the ways we can transform and heal our self and collective identities and realities. When one plunges into one’s wounding, one can, according to Anzaldúa, awaken an inner awareness that is greater than our individual wounds, imagining ways of going through *nepantla*’s disorientations to achieve wholeness and

⁸⁴Ibid. p. 88.

⁸⁵Ibid. p. 89.

⁸⁶Ibid.

interconnection to others on the planet and the planet itself.⁸⁷ Finally, Anzaldúa argues, we must utilize the emotive power of our hearts in order to plunge our hands into the mess, embodying the practical, material, spiritual, and political acts of our time, utilizing Anzaldúa's and spiritual activism's critical, pragmatic, and transformative methodologies.⁸⁸ Anzaldúa's politics is a kind of embodied spiritualism or activation of heart epistemology, which she calls 'conocimiento'—the ability to rely on deeper senses and faculties of knowing and inner knowledges.

Furthermore, spiritual activism is inherently linked with healing and emotionality symbolically depicted by the emotional heart. The emotional heart engages in healing work, both inner and outer. It means not just thinking about change, but to put one's hand into the chaos, creating the spaces and times for healing to happen, to nourish and heal the soul with heart; likewise, meditative prayer, a work of imagination and generation of a powerful transformative force, usually accompanies this stage of healing.⁸⁹ Anzaldúa theoretically outlines a path of recuperation on many fronts, a general healing of our humanhood, our selves, our bodies, and our intellectual lives, all of which attempt to develop mental/spiritual/emotional healing skills.⁹⁰ She argues that contemplation allows us to recognize, process, and sort out our anger, frustrations, and pains.⁹¹ This inner contemplation allows us the time and space in which compassion, which grows from the emotional heart's deep feeling, can surface and manifest. She says:

By cultivating awareness, we minimize wounding; by maintaining compassion and empathy for those of different genders, races, classes, regions, generations, and physical and mental capacities, we link to them. To maintain our connections, we must cultivate liberating insights/conocimientos and radical realizations that burst through the cracks of

⁸⁷Ibid. p. 90.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid. p. 92.

our unconscious and flow up from our cenotes. We need artistic expressions and efforts that heal inspire, that generate enough creative energy to make a difference in our lives and in those of others.⁹²

Thus, Anzaldúa's notion of *conocimiento* posits that we can rely and utilize other forms of knowledges and epistemologies. It is what allows us to generate and maintain compassion and empathy for all: all genders, races, classes, regions, animals, lands, and peoples. And it is this empathy and compassion, spawned from the heart's intelligence, that allows us to connect, heal, and transform with and for others. Healing, empathy, and compassion thus all play a salient and interconnected role in the work of the spiritual activist in that transformation requires emotional wounding and healing, allowing compassion and our heart's intelligence to facilitate an emotional change powerful enough to alter our daily habits, senses of identities, and social and political structures. Without deep feeling, empathetic compassion, or emotionality we will not generate the power needed to reconstruct our realities and identities or provide the positive and substantial social change we desperately need given our global condition.

But we need emotions and deep feelings which are tied to reason according to Anzaldúa in order to change ourselves and our social condition. Anzaldúa regularly asserts that the emotional heart directs or communicates with the intellect or our mind's reason, again citing a 'heart with reason'. In her *Entrevistas/Interviews*, Anzaldúa is interviewed by various scholars, as she divulges her beliefs in a more personalized, less academic format. In her interview with Irene Lara, Anzaldúa describes an entirely "feeling" heart: when feelings such as anger, bitterness overwhelm you because they are not stitched with reason. Anzaldúa then describes a "mindful heart" or "un corazón con razón" is what allows us to understand, deepen our feelings

⁹²Ibid.

and when to reach out to others.⁹³ And it is the role of the emotional heart, tied with intellect and reason, in which we can access deeper insights, feelings, and knowledges such as love and empathy which lead to positive, substantial, and ever-lasting social change.

Similarly, AnaLouise Keating, who directly takes up and analyzes later theories such as spiritual activism, speaks to this openness required for emotionality, wounding and transforming. Keating describes her empathetic notion of *raw openness* and its profound ability for transformation, resembling Anzaldúa's emotional heart. Keating suggests that self and social change requires deep listening, empathy, changeability, and hard work with what she coins "raw openness". She states:

I use the term *raw openness* to underscore the painful, vulnerable dimensions. When I listen with raw openness I expose myself to you; I am willing to be altered by our encounter. Like other forms of spiritual activism, listening with raw openness begins with the belief in our interrelatedness, with the willingness to posit and seek commonalities—commonalities defines not as sameness by as possible points of connection.⁹⁴

Moreover, raw openness requires one to be able to wounded and vulnerable to new encounters, engagements, and experiences. Raw openness refers to this idea of 'deep listening' and empathetic connection, seeking commonality through empathy, and instigating positive social change through the search for commonality. Raw openness mirrors Anzaldúa's emotional heart because they both require that we painfully expose ourselves to the world, permitting ourselves to be altered, not able to rest upon one universalizing or essentializing ontological category. We must first be open to the experiences of others, other people, countries, customs, etc, establishing an empathetic connection with the world. Raw openness and the emotional heart recognize the necessity of woundedness and emotional contemplation in transformation. We must first be able

⁹³Keating, AnaLouise. *Entremundos/Amongworlds: New Perspectives on Gloria E. Anzaldúa*. p. 44.

⁹⁴Keating, AnaLouise. "Shifting Perspectives: Spiritual Activism, Social Transformation, and the Politics of Spirit," Springer, 2016. p. 250.

to be wounded, to be emotionally open to the world, then to empathize with others. It also assumes a deep interconnection with others, a search for the ‘unmapped common ground’ between all. This raw openness epitomizes the first step in self-transformation: to be open to world and experience, to engage in deep feeling and emotionality, and most importantly, empathize with others so that healing and transformation can take place. Furthermore, Keating’s raw openness helps describe and support what Anzaldúa means by the emotional heart and their means of establishing positive social change: opening up oneself to the world, to emotionality, and to empathy so that we can heal and transform ourselves and our social condition.

Furthermore, I read raw openness as another depiction of the emotional heart and as a necessary step in recognizing the endless transformative processes of creating new positive social possibilities. The emotional heart plays a foundational role in how we are to change ourselves, our communities, and our global condition, by engaging in deep feeling, listening, and empathetic connection with others. This process leads to pain and suffering because we have to constantly renegotiate our own identities and relations with others. However, as Anzaldúa stipulates, blaming or pointing the finger at others does not lead to healing or positive change. What does lead to change for Anzaldúa is the experiencing and contemplation of our emotionality, which when mediated with reason, leads one to establish empathetic connection with the world. Together, heart and reason direct emotionality toward openness, empathy, and positive change, attempting to build bridges, connections, alliances, and community with others. This process however leads to pain and suffering because we have to constantly renegotiate our own identities and relations with others, and it requires that we are open to emotionality itself, that we use emotionality to change ourselves and others, and that without emotionality, raw

openness, and empathetic connection, we do not have the creative or affective power needed to truly transcend our social condition and manifest positive social change.

The Spiritual/Energetic Heart

In Anzaldúa's final and most comprehensive chapter, "Now Let Us Shift," she presents her seven stages of *conocimiento* theorized from years of study and life experience, including esoteric sources such as the Tarot, I Ching, dowsing, astrology, and numerology.⁹⁵ She describes the first step as the initial earthquake shock of trauma, chaos, and important life events. The second phase embodies the *napantlera*'s transitional space, where the outer boundaries of the mind's inner life and meet the outer world of reality, expanding and contracting possibilities, open to other perspectives, more readily able to access knowledge derived from inner feelings, imaginal states, and holistic awareness.⁹⁶ After this intermediary stage, one ends up in the Coatlicue state, or the depths of despair, self-loathing, and hopelessness, paralyzing one for weeks.⁹⁷ In the fourth stage, a call to action pulls you out of depression and hopelessness; you break free from your habitual coping strategies and behaviours, undergoing a conversion.⁹⁸ The fifth stage allows you to track ongoing circumstances in your life, to sift, sort and symbolize your experiences, arranging them into a new pattern and story that speaks to your life.⁹⁹ The sixth stage however brings promise of failure, as we test our new story and reality against a world upon which it ultimately collapses, resulting in disappointment, tremendous anger, and repressed

⁹⁵ Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. p. 120.

⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 122.

⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 123.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

emotions, unable to activate inner resources.¹⁰⁰ In the final seventh space, a critical and transformative shift occurs, you develop an ethical and compassionate strategy with which to negotiate conflict and difference within the self and others, finding common ground, forming alliances. You include these new practices into your daily life, utilizing the knowledge to enact your vision, enacting spiritual activism¹⁰¹:

Together, the seven stages open the senses and enlarge the breadth and depth of consciousness, causing internal shifts and external changes [spiritual activism]. All seven are present within each stage, and they occur concurrently, chronologically or not. Together [El Conocimiento, Coyoxauhqui, Nepantl(er)a, and Spiritual Activism], these stations comprise a meditation on the rites of passage, the transitions of life from birth to death, and all the daily births and deaths in between. Bits of your self die and are reborn in each step.¹⁰²

Anzaldúa demonstrates her powerful model for transformation and the spiritual knowledges that come with her intuitive and dynamic concept of el conocimiento, nepantlera, C.I., and spiritual activism. She calls upon C.I. to symbolize the process of emotional and psychical dismemberment, splitting mind, body, spirit, and heart. It is the creative process of putting the pieces back together again, revealing new identity-formations and descriptions of self, world, and your place in it.¹⁰³ She also speaks about Nepantla and its point of contact where the ‘mundane’ and the ‘numinous’ converge, fully aware of one’s spatial condition of liminality. And it is here where Anzaldúa incorporates a spiritual and energetic component to self, reality, and her notion of the heart, which is the ability to empathetically link to others and incite profound compassion for humanity, animals, and the planet itself. But first, we need to understand Anzaldúa’s spirituality in order to understand its relation to the epistemology of the heart.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Ibid. p. 124.

¹⁰³Ibid. p. 125.

Anzaldúa posits a spiritual, non-physical reality. She bases her seven stages off of various Aztec, eastern, indigenous, and Hindu systems. Similarly, Anzaldúa recognizes an alternative metaphysically substantive spiritual reality in which subtle energies beyond our senses and experiences interact and communicate. She asserts, “The twin-faced patlache of your indigenous queer heritage is also the symbol of *la otra tu*, the double of dream body (energetic body). *La naguala* connects you to these others and to unconscious and invisible forces. In *nepantla* you sense more keenly the overlap between the material and spiritual worlds.”¹⁰⁴ Anzaldúa thus believes that there lies a spiritual world in which the material world manifests from, and that *nepantla* can help recognize the subtle or invisible forces in which the material and spirit interact. Anzaldúa furthermore begins to explore how ‘energetic bodies’ influence and become influenced by the material realities in which we live. Anzaldúa continues by describing her experience of spiritual realities and subtle energies throughout her writing and experiences of her body. She emphasizes:

It dawns on you that you’re not contained by your skin—you exist outside your body and outside your dream body, as well. If the body is energy, is spirit—it doesn’t have boundaries. What if you experienced your body expanding to the size of the room, not your soul leaving your body. What if freedom from categories occurs by widening the psyche/body’s borders, widening the consciousness that senses self (the body is the basis for the conscious sense of self, the representation of self in the mind).¹⁰⁵

Thus, Anzaldúa does not wish to uphold the Cartesian mind/body split, matter/spirit dichotomy. The energy of the body interacts with the energy of the mind and the energy of spirit in complex and non-dualistic ways. Anzaldúa remains pluralistic about the various kinds of energies—body, mind, spirit, heart—that can exist and interact, composing our reality. She argues that a substantial energetic or spiritual body lies behind a material, physical body. And it is this point of

¹⁰⁴Ibid. p. 128.

¹⁰⁵Ibid. p. 134.

connection that Anzaldúa calls ‘the spiritual heart’: the connection between the spiritual body, emotional body, and physical body.

The spiritual heart strengthens Anzaldúa’s notion that the heart primarily functions as a means and symbol for integration, linking our body, mind, and spirit together in complex ways. The spiritual heart is what gives us the *conocimiento* to listen to our inner voices, revealing our core passion, which points us to our sense of purpose and guiding vision. The energetic or spiritual heart is what connects the spiritual body with the material body. It is what gives us the knowledge to discover resources within ourselves and in the world, prompting us to take responsibility for consciously creating our worlds and lives, becoming a fully healthy, loving, and functioning human being.¹⁰⁶ In addition, she states, “You become reacquainted with a reality called spirit, a presence, force, power, energy, within and without. Spirit infuses all that exists—organic and inorganic—transcending the categories and concepts that govern your perception of material reality.”¹⁰⁷ Moreover, Anzaldúa posits a invisible energetic and spritual force that unites all other forces, including material reality.

In another revealing interview, Anzaldúa speaks of metaphysical spirit as vibrational, which is the ‘heart’ of our physical reality. She says, “Spirit exists in everything...the vibration—a rock, a plant, an animal, a human, a particular area. That vibration is like the song of its being, its heartbeat, its rhythm.”¹⁰⁸ For Anzaldúa, similarly, every emotion and feeling has a vibrational state, and it is through vibration, she believes, that the spiritual interconnects all living and non-living things. Her *Nepantla* concept, too, is the in-between or transitions between worlds such as race, sexual identity, and class. Its experiences involve not only learning how to

¹⁰⁶Ibid. p. 136.

¹⁰⁷Ibid. p. 138.

¹⁰⁸Anzaldúa, Gloria and AnaLouise Keating. *Interviews = Entrevistas*. p. 100.

access different kinds of knowledges—feelings, events in one’s life, images in-between or alongside reality—they also involve creating your own meaning or *conocimientos*.¹⁰⁹ And thus it is the interaction between the spirit and the physical worlds that allows us to create and understand spirit. It is the interaction between the physical body and the spiritual or energetic realities which allow us to sense and use this vibrational, spiritual, energetic heart to connect with others, the planet, and the universe. And it is how and why we can empathetically communicate with others in extrasensory and supernatural ways. Anzaldúa ends her interview and states:

I’d also like to emphasize that we can’t ignore the body, because we live in the physical world. We’re not here just as disembodied spirits, we’re here as embodied spirits. Also, we should open our hearts to people through empathetic connection, a connection that sometimes our minds don’t understand because our perceptions are so limited. Sometimes the heart understands without any rational explanations or causes. We have to let go of hurt, of the wounds of controversy. We have to let go of hurt of hatred, of pointing the finger at people all the time.¹¹⁰

Furthermore, we clearly see the belief of the intuition and knowledge of the heart and that it is a gateway to empathetic and compassionate connection with others, animals, and the natural environment of which Anzaldúa advocates. It is the energetic of spiritual heart that connects and works together with body and spirit, which allows us to create and change our worlds, realities, and perceptions. And this spiritual connection may now be beginning to find its way in our scientific understandings, glimpsing the newly discovered bioelectrical or energetic heart and the ways in which its vibrational or bioelectric fields may connect us with others and create harmonious, balanced, and coherent habits and patterns which foster healing, transformation, and positivity.

¹⁰⁹Ibid. p. 267.

¹¹⁰Ibid. p. 291.

The heart, like the brain or the gut, has its own network of acquiring information, and for Anzaldúa, it can receive and send subtle signals and information to others, the environment, and the Earth itself if we are sensitive enough to experience it. Recent scientific discovery has also demonstrated that the heart possess its own bioelectric or vibrational field, which may allow our body to communicate with itself, with others, and possibly the planet in unknown yet quantifiably determinable ways. Rollin McCraty's scientific investigation suggests that the biological heart permeates every living cell of the body and may act as a synchronizing signal for the body in a manner analogous to information carried by radio waves.¹¹¹ Likewise, it is shown that this information from the heart is not only transmitted via the brain, but other detectable forms within the heart's own bioelectricalmagnetic field.¹¹² Lastly, McCraty's research indicates that cells studied in vitro are also responsive to the heart's bioelectrical field.

In this more scientific approach, we learn that the heart generates the largest electromagnetic field in the body, 60 times greater than the amplitude of the brain, and 5,000 times stronger in a magnetic component; he continues to suggest that the heart may play an important role in emotional and perceptive experience and possess its own decision-making capabilities.¹¹³ McCraty states:

Research in the relatively new discipline of neurocardiology has confirmed that the heart is a sensory organ and acts as a sophisticated information encoding and processing center that enables it to learn, remember, and make independent functional decisions that do not involve the cerebral cortex...[and] influences higher brain centers involved in perception and emotional processing.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹McCraty, Rollin. "The Energetic Heart: Bioelectromagnetic Communication within and Between People." p. 1.

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Ibid. p. 3.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

Furthermore, recent data and the development of neurocardiology suggest that the heart may ‘think’ and communicate with the body via its own permeating energy field. McCraty’s findings also show how the heart plays an important role in perception and emotional processing, demonstrating a more scientific approach to Anzaldúa’s artistic, literary style concerning her idea of the spiritual or energetic heart. Thus, McCraty’s research scientifically supports Anzaldúa’s theoretical and philosophical ideas regarding the energetic/spiritual heart. And although Anzaldúa passed away before these findings were able to make their way into the scientific community, I suggest Anzaldúa would have understood, scientifically validated, and supported these findings. Throughout her writing she speaks to the un(der)-explored and un(der)-developed power of the energetic/spiritual heart and its unique role in our emotional, intuitive, and perceptive realities. And as Anzaldúa often speaks to how our spiritual heart can reach out and touch others, McCraty’s research validates its scientific and energetic possibility and potentiality.

McCraty’s evidence supports how the heart may have other ways of receiving information and communicating with others. McCraty argues that new evidence supports the idea that a subtle yet influential electromagnetic or ‘energetic’ communication system operates just below our conscious level of awareness and with others.¹¹⁵ To demonstrate this possibility, McCraty and his team used signal-averaging techniques to detect signals that were synchronous with the peak or R-waves of one subject’s ECG in recordings of another subject’s electroencephalogram (EEG) or brain waves. The results of the experiments led them to conclude that the nervous system acts as an antenna, which is tuned to respond to the magnetic

¹¹⁵Ibid. p. 7.

fields produced by the hearts of other individuals.¹¹⁶ McCraty and his colleagues call this new means of energetic information exchange, “cardioelectromagnetic communication,” and they believe it to be an innate ability that heightens awareness and mediates important aspects of empathetic connection and sensitivity to others, constructing an emotionally and physiologically coherent and stable bioelectrical signal and field.¹¹⁷

To further support these findings, simultaneously and independently, Russek Schwartz at the University of Arizona conducted similar experiments in which a detection occurs between an individual’s cardiac signal in another’s EEG recording when two people sit quietly, without physical contact, as Schwartz et al describe the heart as a prime generator, organizer, and integrator of energy in the human body.¹¹⁸ Also, in comparison with Anzaldúa’s central notion of healing in her theory of spiritual activism, this radically new heart science shows how developing healthy ‘coherent’ heart signals—its bioelectrical patterns, signals, and rhythms—plays a role in the healing process. In other words, the more synchronized, stable, and coherent one’s (ECG) heart signal is, the more likely they are to biologically (and perhaps emotionally) heal, as these states can be induced by meditation, prayer, or feelings of peace, gratitude, and appreciation. Rollin cites a particularly interesting experiment in which human fibroblasts and fibrosarcoma (tumor cells) were both exposed to the same coherent ECG signal. They found that the growth of healthy cells was facilitated by 20% and, unexpectedly, the growth of the tumor cells was inhibited by 20%, believing that these treatments can help restore normal pattern and

¹¹⁶Ibid. p. 8.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Ibid. p. 10.

activity at the cellular level and that the rhythm and coherence that the heart field produces are key to the healing process.¹¹⁹

Furthermore, McCraty and his colleagues demonstrate that bioelectrical communication stemming from the heart is a real phenomenon that has numerous implications in physical, mental, and emotional health. Ultimately, it could be used to potentially enable a deeper intuitive connection and communication between the self and others and can be a crucial component in healing and the healing process. Moreover, the electromagnetic energy generated by the heart acts as a synchronized force within the body, a key carrier of information, and an apparent mediator of a type of subtle electromagnetic communication between people; the cardiac bioelectromagnetic field may have much to teach us about ourselves, the inner dynamics of health, and our interaction with others and possible planetary signal coherences.¹²⁰

Likewise, for Anzaldúa, the body and the spiritual, biological, and energetic heart are capable of sending energy, signals, and compassion through empathetic connection, highlighting her direct belief and use of the Hindu chakra system, citing the ‘heart chakra’ and the powerful yet subtle connective energy it produces. The spiritual or energetic heart, according to Anzaldúa, can send coherent and harmonious signals of love and compassion to others and the world at large, which incites the possibility for healing and connection, and hence positive social change.

Anzaldúa passionately states:

With awe and wonder you look around, recognizing the preciousness of the earth, the sanctity of every human being on the planet, ultimate unity and interdependence of all beings—somos todos un paiz. Love swells in your chest and shoots out of your heart chakra, linking you to everyone/everything—the aboriginal in Asutraila, the crow in the forest, the vast Pacific Ocean. You share a category of identity wider than any social position or racial label. This conocimiento motivates you to work actively to see that no

¹¹⁹Ibid. p. 15.

¹²⁰Ibid. p. 16.

harm comes to people, animals, ocean—to take up spiritual activism and the work of healing.¹²¹

Anzaldúa thus implicitly describes her energetic/spiritual heart as manifesting a deep empathetic connection and compassion for humanity, animals and the planet, which itself is a means of enabling positive social change. Anzaldúa illustrates her incorporation of the chakra system and its power of the energetic/spiritual heart to reach and link with others across the globe, the planet, and the natural environment in order to manifest positive social change in which our goal is to see to it that no harm comes to anyone or anything. And her energetic or spiritual heart is what connects us to others, empathetically linking us to everyone and everything. It is her spiritual and energetic heart which spawns compassion, love, and empathy for everyone and everything on the planet, dictating that we work to actively see that no harm comes to people, animals, nature, and oceans.

In written form, she shows and uses her power from her energetic/spiritual heart to build a connection between herself and the rest of the world. She posits that we can send energy and signals via the heart chakra (spiritual heart) to those across the world, that we are spiritually connected via this energetic web, and that the energetic/spiritual heart is what gives us that profound feeling of interconnectedness, love, compassion, and empathy for others, animals, and the planet itself. It is here where Anzaldúa theoretically implies the depth of the heart, its energetic or spiritual reality, its ability to materialize positive social change, and the ways in which Anzaldúa herself attempts to feel and use this power and knowledge in her writing. She attempts to create, foster, and artistically capture the art and act of instantiating positive social change by contemplating and acting on our interconnectedness via the spiritual heart and its

¹²¹Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. p. 138.

other ways of sensing and knowing and communicating—that which allows us to link and empathize with others, animals, and the Earth itself. This transformation brings about new versions of reality. It demands that you employ alternative ways of knowing, and rewire your ways of seeing, thinking, feeling, and expressing.¹²²

She continues to assert that *el conocimiento* partially stems from the heart's epistemology. She says, "The heart es un corazon con razon, with intelligence, passion, and purpose, a 'mind-ful' heart with ears for listening, eyes for seeing, a mouth with tongue, narrowing to a pen tip for speaking."¹²³ Thus, for Anzaldúa, the heart is intelligent and possesses its own ways of knowing, deepening our spiritual knowledge and interconnectedness with others. Likewise, the energetic/spiritual heart, according to Anzaldúa, is what spiritually connects us with others on the globe, nature, and the planet itself. It possesses deeper knowledge of the world of which we can access if we are quiet, sensitive, and patient enough to listen, and we can use this energy to positively change ourselves and our world. Love and pain can incite compassion and tenderness to yourself and others. And through her writing process, Anzaldúa expresses profound love and interconnectedness with the world, as she ends her book with a poem dedicated to nature and spiritual activism:

May the fires of compassion ignite our hands sending energy out into the universe where it might best be of service, May the love we share inspire others to act... We are ready for change, Let us link hands and hearts... Now let us shift.¹²⁴

Anzaldúa moreover captures the ways in which it is our heart's epistemology—its intelligence, emotionality and affectivity (emotional heart), love, empathetic connection, and compassion

¹²²Ibid. p. 142.

¹²³Ibid. p. 153.

¹²⁴Ibid. p. 158-9.

(energetic/spiritual heart)—linked with our actions that send positive energy outward into the world, fomenting healing, transformation, integration, and positive social change.

Anzaldúa's vast complex and dynamic concept of the heart merits theoretical inquiry and research. The energetic/spiritual heart plays a vital role for Anzaldúa in that it has the power to connect, send energy to others and the cosmos itself and transform our existing social order by sharing and spreading love, compassion, and empathy. If we feel and transmit these coherent energetic and emotional states, signals, and fields of love, peace, and compassion according to Anzaldúa, we add to making the world a better place, to making a better world for all—all animals, peoples, organisms, and natural environments. And in this way, Anzaldúa's writing demonstrates how she herself tries to exert these states and contribute to making the world a better place with the energetic/spiritual heart. Her energetic and spiritual heart provide the deeper spiritual and vibrational coherence, balance, and harmony which manifests positive social change in material reality, acting so that no harm comes to any living thing or natural system. Anzaldúa therefore prompts us to change, and it requires changing and opening up to the epistemology, wisdom, and power of the heart, fostering healing, transformation, and empathetic and compassionate connection with others, animals, nature, and the planet itself.

CHAPTER THREE: A NEW ETHICS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

We are bonded to this planet in ways we don't even imagine. We are in partnership with the Earth, but the partnership must go both ways; we must demonstrate trust, love, respect, and reciprocity, to make this bond work.

-Gloria Anzaldúa, "Flights of the Imagination: Rereading/Rewriting Realities"

Introduction

Anzaldúa's *Luz en lo Oscuro (Light in the Dark)* also theorizes and contemplates the relationship between our identity-formations, natural space, and spirituality. Although Anzaldúa does not directly discuss or argue for a clear and comprehensive environmental ethic, I will suggest we can excavate and manufacture a new way of conceiving nature within the context of spiritual activism. In fact, spiritual activism requires that we radically (re)think our relationship with natural space and the environment, hoping to establish a healthy and beneficial relationship with both the environment and others, not one composed of the massive environmental degradation, habitat loss, deforestation, and agricultural exploitation as in today's neocolonial, capitalistic, consumeristic, and unsustainable global system. Hoping to illuminate, expand, and strengthen this un(der)-explored and un(der)-developed theme in her work and conception of spiritual activism, I will attempt to make Anzaldúa's thoughts regarding nature and the natural environment in relation to spiritual activism more comprehensive and robust.

In this chapter, I argue that spiritual activism allows us to synthesize a new environmental ethic which expands on notions and senses of self that include the natural environment in which we live. I attempt to explain and dissect what Anzaldúa means when she says that we need to transform our relationship with the natural environment by "working with nature" or to see it as a "partnership," as she often cites. In doing so, Anzaldúa's spiritual activism gives us new ways of looking at and interacting with natural environment and space in

revolutionary ways. This shift allows us to create a positive social change by the way her environmental ethic attempts to establish substantial and ever-lasting environmental, ecological, and agricultural sustainability which can healthily support human societies and communities.

I show how spiritual activism allows us to construct a new environmental ethic which enacts positive social change by recognizing (i) the increasing neocolonial, exploitative global structure of natural space which leads to rampant environmental degradation and unsustainability and (ii) permaculture ideologies and practices which directly attempt to build sustainable means of agriculture. Similarly, Anzaldúa criticizes the current structure of natural space and our relationship with nature, depleting its natural resources to support western culture, unsustainable agriculture and commerce, and radically consumeristic identities and lifestyles. I suggest that these sections describe the un(der)-explored and un(der)-developed themes in Anzaldúa's ideas concerning nature and the environment, allowing us to construct a new environmental ethics in which we attempt to 'work with nature,' as well as provide the framework we need in order to create positive and sustainable change in terms of agricultural, ecological, and environmental sustainability. I suggest that these less theorized and understood ideas are foundational for understanding Anzaldúa's spiritual activism, her thoughts concerning nature, her growing, evolving philosophy, and the ways in which these shifts in identity-formations force us to rethink our relationship with space and the natural environment on an individual and global scale. But to do so, I need to discuss how and why I have organized each section and its ultimate goal.

In section (i), I heavily rely on Anzaldúa's description of neocolonialism and its exploitative structure and organization of space and natural resources. This will be a detailed analysis of how Anzaldúa sees the current structure of space and the ways it leads to the

environmental degradation, global disparity, and inequality of natural resources. She uses her experience of 9/11 as an example of chaotic events which can trigger and make us (re)evaluate our lives, contemplating how our actions contribute to global suffering and inequality and environmental exploitation and degradation. To do this, Anzaldúa spatially analyzes the global distribution of natural resources, highlighting the U.S.'s role in hyper-consumerism and the consumption of far more resources than other countries, resulting in massive global inequality and natural resource disparity. Anzaldúa utilizes both critical, transformative, and pragmatic methodologies in the way she attempts to transform our current social condition and its real world-issues concerning the distribution of resources and environmental exploitation. Furthermore, I describe Anzaldúa's experience and analysis of neocolonialism and the current structure of space, which is the first step in reconstituting our relationship with the natural space and environment in which we live.

In section (ii), I theoretically and critically apply Anzaldúa's understanding of the natural environment in terms of spiritual activism. I apply the theoretical principles of spiritual activism to our current mono-, animal-, and industrial-agricultural systems which all function within the neocolonial production and distribution of natural space, resources, and agriculture. I argue that these pernicious and outdated models are inefficient and damaging, resulting in substantial loss and degradation of the environment, which lead to irreparable habit loss and resource depletion. These models are simply inefficient and destructive, exploiting nature and its resources instead of working with nature in order to sustainably produce agriculture and human communities. Thereby, I draw the connection between spiritual activism's dictum of working with nature and the practice of permaculture, which attempts to find effective and efficient means of agricultural, environmental, and ecological sustainability. Permaculture uses nature's resources to create self-

sustaining systems which not only benefits the immediate natural ecosystem, but also replenishes habitats and lands that have been destroyed by industrial agricultural methods. It seeks natural methods and ultimately aims to establish balance with nature and its natural systems, attempting to create a partnership with nature in the way spiritual activism and Anzaldúa advocate. I make the theoretical connection between spiritual activism and permaculture, which Anzaldúa does not directly make herself, but I believe to be a solution to our agricultural issues and a theoretical application of spiritual activism which helps to unpack and understand spiritual activism's tenets.

Spiritual Activism Recognizes Increasing Neocolonial Globalization and Its Oppressive Structure of Natural Space

Anzaldúa uses her experience of and inner dialog of the aftermath of 9/11 as a metaphor and opportunity for self- and collective-reflection and reevaluation. She describes the ways in which the global structure of natural space influences social injustice and identity-formations. She states:

As I see it, this country's [United States] real battle is with its shadow—its racism, propensity for violence, rapacity for consuming, neglect of its responsibility to global communities and the environment, and unjust treatment of dissenters and the disenfranchised, especially people of color.¹²⁵

She goes on to challenge us—those situated in the U.S.—individually and collectively by exposing our shadows or modes of being that cause harm to others and the environment. She recognizes the ways in which we are individually complicit and responsible. She calls out the U.S.'s military industrial-complex and war-to-profit mongers that nation-sponsored 'war of terror' and that used the death of victims of 9/11 to reestablish control of the Middle East and

¹²⁵Ibid. p. 10.

exploit its natural gas and oil reserves¹²⁶, which continue to fill our cars with gas and produce the energy needed to run our cities. She condemns U.S. corporations that thrive on war economy, imperialism, environmental degradation, and globalization.¹²⁷ And she places some of the burden of responsibility on individuals—U.S. citizens—who willfully remain mis- or un-informed and refuse to acknowledge these global injustices propagated by U.S. and western ideology, culture, and lifestyle.

Anzaldúa is challenging us to truly see how the *spaces* in which we live and the *ways* in which we live have led and will continue to lead to catastrophes such as 9/11 that sustain world violence and exploitation. She is writing from her own embodied and lived experiences of 9/11 and increasing neocolonial globalization—which she sees as the growing disparity between First World and Third World countries, primarily propagated by U.S. imperialism and western identity-formations. She attempts to understand her identity through the way she acts and affects the global community, criticizing her and the U.S.’s role in over- and hyper-consumption, which leads to the global exploitation of natural resources and violence. While using Bush and his administration as exemplars that perpetuate *deconocimiento* (ignorance) and oppressive power structures, she asserts:

They [Bush and his administration] refuse el conocimiento (spiritual knowledge) that we’re interconnected by invisible fibers to everyone on the planet, and that each person’s actions affect the rest of the world. Putting gas in our cars connects us to the Middle East. Take a shower squandering water and someone on the planet goes thirsty; waste food and someone starves to death. Although we make up approximately 4.5% of the people on the planet, we consume 82 percent of its resources. And fear, ignorance, greed, overconsumption, and a voracious appetite for power is what this war is about.¹²⁸

¹²⁶Ibid. p. 13.

¹²⁷Ibid. p. 14.

¹²⁸Ibid. p. 15.

By acknowledging and revealing our current western modes of living that cause harm, violence, deprivation, and death elsewhere in the world, Anzaldúa sees global problems as intimately interconnected and propagated by neocolonial and U.S., western expansion. It shows the ways in which neocolonialism sucks the resources and life force from Third World countries for the privileged First World countries, primarily the U.S. and its wasteful, over-consumptive, and environmentally-destructive culture. Neocolonial economic and political models sponsored by the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and The World Bank are not only globalized and provide the financial and political support for First World countries like the U.S. to environmentally exploit developing nations, they support our current consumer culture, which has seeped into our cultural, social and individual identities, ideologies, and behaviors, contributing to and allowing the global exploitation of natural space and resources to occur. For Anzaldúa, we firstly need to recognize these modes of being which lead to mass global inequality, natural resource inequality, and environmental degradation in order to understand and positively transform them.

Anzaldúa's *Coyolxauhqui Imperative* (C.I.) allows us to deconstruct these western means of living and being. Anzaldúa advocates that we dismember these western ideologies and practices that lead to dysfunctional economic and political systems, global exploitation, world poverty, and our culture of over-consumption, voraciously depleting natural resources. El conocimiento is what gives us the ability to become more aware of how our actions and shadows negatively affect the rest of the world, contemplating and renegotiating the ways in which identity-formations interact with global systems and natural space. El conocimiento makes us (re)think how the use and occupation of the natural spaces in which we live influence our identities, minds, and bodies. Anzaldúa thus recognizes the neocolonial corporeality of the 21st century world in which we live and the ways in which these western ideological tenets and

modes of living cause global violence, war, environmental degradation, and inequality. She wishes to deconstruct these means of production that lead to over-consumption and exploitation and the ways we, those in the U.S. and in the developed world, have neglected its environmental impact, relinquishing social responsibility, and taking far more resources than what we need as individuals and as a nation. She attempts to decolonize the current western models of epistemology and ontology, challenging the underlying structures that lead to such disparity, such as capitalism, consumerism, and radical individualism.

Anzaldúa continues her critique of neocolonialism as she mourns the U.S.'s loss of connection to the Earth—a conscious being which keens through us for all the trees felled, air poisoned, water polluted, and animals slaughtered into extinction.¹²⁹ Anzaldúa explicates the *deconocimientos* that we, as a nation, have alienated ourselves from the rest of the world. *Nepantleras*, in response to this need, are mediators who existentially contemplate the ways in which our individual actions affect the rest of the world. Anzaldúa, exemplifying a *Nepantlera* herself, attempts to occupy and understand the spaces between our individual actions and identities and their global, environmental repercussions. She is throwing herself into the spaces that allow for holistic- and world-thinking by acknowledging her material reality and questioning her actions on a global scale. This living 'in between' the spaces, in between her individual actions and its global effects given today's geopolitical system, demarcates new ways of thinking and living, fully recognizing our destructive and current political, economic, environmental, and social realities in order to alter them.

Anzaldúa's *el conocimiento* is the deep spiritual knowledge that observes the subtle yet material ways we are interconnected. It represents the deep knowledge and awareness that we are

¹²⁹Ibid. p. 113.

connected by ‘invisible fibers’. World events and catastrophes like 9/11 can force us to think not in terms of ‘my’ country or ‘your’ nation, but ‘our’ planet and the ways in which our actions affect others and the planet’s natural environment.¹³⁰ These events can shake our currently perceived identities to those which (re)consider how our actions materially affect others and the natural world. El conocimiento asks us to recognize that none of us are blameless, as Anzaldúa herself displays how she contemplates and considers our relationship with the natural environment. She states, “I listen to the waves impact the shore...perhaps caused by a storm in a distant corner of the earth or the ice melting in the Arctic Ocean.”¹³¹ Anzaldúa points to the ways in which we can begin to reconstruct new identities that involve (re)imagining our relationship with the environment, our individual actions and their global consequences—e.g. climate change, ecological un-sustainability, etc.

Continuing her analysis of neocolonialism, in chapter three, “Border Arte,” she uses her trip through Denver’s Museum of Natural History to (re)conceptualize neocolonial appropriation and exploitation of our minds, spirits, bodies, and imagination. She reminisces about the borderlands, the spot where all other places are within it: “It’s like el árbol de la vida which crosses all dimensions—the sky, spiritual space, the earth, and the underworld. It’s also like el cenote, the Mayan well—an ombligo (an umbilical cord) connecting us to the earth and concrete reality.”¹³² She goes on to note how Nepantlas such as Native Americans, immigrants, people of color, whites, queers, homosexuals, are all border people, having to navigate between two or more worlds in some way.¹³³ She underscores the ways in which everyone is a border person in some way, having to live in opposing and multiple worlds, ideologies, cultures, and forces. This

¹³⁰Ibid. p. 20.

¹³¹Ibid. p. 21.

¹³²Ibid. p. 57.

¹³³Ibid.

Nepantla state causes internal disorientation and disruption, existentially questioning one's identity, one's reality, and one's place in it.

To be Nepantla, then, is to be in a constant disorientating state, never having a fixed sense of identity or self, constantly exploring themes of identity, border crossing, and hybrid imagery.¹³⁴ This hybridization also exemplifies the deconstruction/reconstruction process depicted by C.I. and the ways in which we can transform ideas about personal and collective identities and our understanding of inner (personal) and outer (structural) space. The Nepantla attempts to bridge this connection between inner and outer space by the healing, medicinal, and creative processes of art and art-making. Our greatest goal, says Anzaldúa, is to teach and learn tolerance and respect for the Earth, and the people of the Earth.¹³⁵ Likewise, the continual capitalization of the word 'Earth' in her writing suggests her willingness to ascribe agency and personhood to the planetary body itself, making Earth a proper noun and imagining a living subject in which we are interacting and relating with. She is metaphorically and literally rewriting the relationship she has with the planet—the spiritual work of making bridges, partnerships that connect us to others, the natural space and environment around us, and the Earth itself.

Anzaldúa is interested in how real-life experiences shape how we view and relate to our bodies. She is interested in bodies that grow up in western cultures and borderlands that witness economically-lucrative produced wars, environmental degradation, and global exploitation, such as 9/11. She is keenly observant to note how the neocolonial context of how we materially relate to one another seeps into our psyches, emotions, bodies, and behaviors, resulting in inner fragmentation and disconnection with others, nature, and the world around us. Moreover,

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵Ibid.

Anzaldúa wishes to transform and decolonize these modes of producing, acting, and being. It is only after acknowledging the corporeality and contemporary relationship we have with our immediate space and time that allow us to transcend these modes of being and construct new ethical systems, relationships, and partnerships with the natural environment. And thus, the concept of spiritual activism and its new environmental ethic demands that we critically evaluate and change the current neocolonial, exploitative structure of space in which we live today. It demands that we (re)think identity and natural space and that we rewrite an identity that acknowledges these actual destructive geopolitical trends and their devastating environmental costs. This is the first powerful step, according to Anzaldúa, in which we can create new identity-formations that foster positive social change in order to deepen our connection between ourselves, others, the natural environment, and the planetary body itself.

Spiritual Activism Embraces Permaculture Ideology and Practice

I argue that an exemplary application of this ideological shift and incorporation of spiritual practice with political action is the development of permaculture agriculture. Although Anzaldúa does not directly mention permaculture in her writings, I suggest that a permaculture ideology and practice is theoretically aligned with and could be an application of her spiritual activism because of their profoundly similar foundations, methodologies, and goals. Permaculture methodology serves, I argue, as an embodiment of spiritual activism in that it tries to build a sustainable relationship with nature, animals, ecosystems, and the planet itself, all of which are direct goals of spiritual activists and Anzaldúa herself. She claims:

Through spirituality we seek balance and harmony with our environment. According to indigenous belief, we are embedded in nature and exist in reciprocity with it. We are bonded to this planet in ways we don't even imagine. We are in partnership with the

Earth, but the partnership must go both ways; we must demonstrate trust, love, respect, and reciprocity, to make this bond work.¹³⁶

Indeed, Anzaldúa demonstrates new spiritual knowledge that is built on harmonious and balanced relationships with the natural environment of which permaculture explicitly advocates. She calls upon indigenous beliefs to help us understand the ways in which we are spiritually embedded in nature. She details a partnership with Earth, not one built on environmental exploitation for capitalistic production and western hyper-consumerism as in today's neocolonial, globalized context.

Although there are many different methods of permaculture, I will borrow Sepp Holzer's permacultural model to quickly demonstrate its extraordinary potential for healing, transforming, and establishing environmental, agricultural, and ecological sustainability, which provides benefits for all and demarcates a new environmental ethic in which we work with nature. In *Permaculture*¹³⁷, Holzer farms more than 100 acres on steep mountainsides in Austria, 5,000 feet above sea-level. He has constructed an intricate network of terraces, raised beds, waterways, tracks, and ponds and is said to have developed the most consistent example of permaculture worldwide.¹³⁸ His permaculture system is environmentally, agriculturally, and ecologically sustainable and establishes self-sustaining micro-climates and -systems. He has revived and healed previously damaged lands and acidic soils, and his model drastically differs from conventional mono-, animal, and industrial-agricultural systems that degrade and irrevocably destroy land for agribusiness, agro-forestry, and capitalistic production.

Holzer's self-sustaining model not only thrives on seemingly impossible steep mountainsides in Austria's freezing weather and requires little human-maintenance after initial

¹³⁶Ibid. p. 39.

¹³⁷See Holzer, Sepp. *Permaculture*. Chelsea Green Publishing. 2004.

¹³⁸Holzer. *Permaculture*. p. ix.

installation, it produces *more* land for farming, harvests a *surplus* of various fruits, cereals, grains, and vegetables, and *benefits* the entire immediate ecosystem as a whole. His philosophy utilizes local resources and natural geography such as terraces, wind patterns, and mountainsides to create natural irrigation, ponds, and waterways.¹³⁹ He uses raised beds to save water and establishes natural microclimates which prevent vegetation from freezing over.¹⁴⁰ He uses earthworms, mushrooms, and pig manure as natural grazers, plows, and fertilizers—all of which contribute to healing, replenishing, and revitalizing the lands' soil with recycling nutrients.¹⁴¹ Holzer's organic farm offers a positive alternative to conventional, animal-, mono- and industrial-agricultural methods because it attempts to work *with* nature, to use its natural geography and local resources for sustainable farming, maximizing food production, revolutionizing agriculture, and benefitting the entire ecosystem as a whole, as all life thrives.

These innovative models, which Holzer explores and practices, profoundly resembles and shares Anzaldúa's project and concept of spiritual activism, *el conocimiento*, and *Nepantleras*. Holzer's model attempts to mediate the spaces between agriculture and the natural environment. It attempts to create a new value system and relationship with the natural environment which incorporates thousands of years of ancient agricultural methods. It (re)imagines a symbiosis or partnership with the natural environment, which learns from and benefits the specific and unique ecosystem in which one cultivates, tends, or grows. Because Holzer has attained a profound level of attunement to his specific geography and locality, he also represents *el conocimiento* or the deep spiritual knowledge that he has garnered from his forty years of experience and practice working with his particular region of land. And after many trials and errors, and attempting to do

¹³⁹Ibid. p. 24, 33, 44.

¹⁴⁰Ibid. p. 19-21.

¹⁴¹Ibid. p. 83-5, 137-8, 185.

this ‘deep listening’ to nature of which Anzaldúa calls for, Holzer has fundamentally built a new relationship with the land and created a new environmental ethic in which we appreciate, respect, and work with nature.

Because Holzer attempts to work with nature, his permacultural model strongly aligns with Anzaldúa’s spiritual activism and philosophy. Holzer ‘listened’ to the natural processes of the environment: its hills, waterways, wind patterns, endemic species, weather patterns, etc. This deep knowledge of the physical world allows us to conceive of building a harmonious relationship with the environment in novel ways when it comes to food production and environmental and ecological sustainability. He improves upon unsustainable practices such as industrial and animal farming and agriculture, both of which seriously degrade the land and maintain the neocolonial and global exploitative structures of space on which they are built. Anzaldúa’s and Holzer’s environmental projects entail maintaining ecological sustainability and upending traditional mono- and animal- industrial-agricultural practices which cause environmental degradation, habitat loss, climate change, and ecological instability. These revolutionary methods contribute to creating substantial positive, substantial, and ever-lasting social change through environmental rehabilitation, reconnection, and sustainability.

Others have also noted Anzaldúa’s implicit concern for the natural environment, our relationship to nature, and the pressing worry over increasingly scarce resources due to unsustainable and exploitative agricultural practices. In a similar yet more general vein, Priscilla Solis Ybarra argues that Anzaldúa’s postcolonial analysis offers us a dynamic site for identity-formation, political resistance, ecological resistance, and environmental sustainability¹⁴²,

¹⁴²Ybarra, Priscilla Solis. "Borderlands as Bioregion: Jovita Gonzalez, Gloria Anzaldua, and the Twentieth-Century Ecological Revolution in the Rio Grande Valley." *Melus: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the US* 34, no. 2 (2009). p. 175-6.

aligning with tenets in both spiritual activism and permaculture. Ybarra mirrors Anzaldúa's and Holzer's goal of attaining environmental sustainability while challenging oppressive social and political systems. Ybarra uses Anzaldúa's analysis to show the scarcity of the earth's resources and the ways in which resources will increasingly become limited amidst issues concerning access to clean water, healthy food, and liveable and growable lands.¹⁴³ Using the Rio Grande Valley, the site where Anzaldúa lived and fought for ecological revolution and agricultural transformation, as a case study, Ybarra argues that environmental injustice and un-sustainability of the earth's resources is becoming an increasingly important concern.¹⁴⁴ Yet, Anzaldúa and her spiritual activism provide an appealing alternative. Ybarra states, "A South Texas native, Anzaldúa documents the transformation of the greater Rio Grande Valley in the late-nineteenth century and early twentieth-century, paying close attention to how these changes affect human relationships with the natural environment."¹⁴⁵ Ybarra outlines how Anzaldúa radically attempts to upend colonialist notions of landowning, rethinking communal identity as one that is profoundly connected with the land and the ways we interact with it. Anzaldúa advocates for more environmental sustainability and sense of community with the natural world. She argues that individuals need to learn about the specific bioregion of the Rio Grande in which they live—its specific seasonal changes, drought cycles, behavior in animals and plants, etc.¹⁴⁶, much like Holzer's permaculture model.

Thus, Ybarra, like myself, acknowledge how Anzaldúa's works do not explicitly engage in projects of natural preservation and conservation; rather, Anzaldúa illustrates how, in an Mexican-American literary context, humans and the natural environment are inextricably linked

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Ibid. p. 177.

¹⁴⁶Ibid. p. 181-2.

and therefore responsible and responsive to one another, contributing to our individual and communal identities.¹⁴⁷ Ybarra states:

This is an active engagement with the environment, a form of environmental literature that does not distance nature from humans. Mexican American environmental writing such as these works concerns living in and with nature, in an active, mutually transformative, but also mutually sustaining way.¹⁴⁸

Furthermore, Ybarra argues that Anzaldúa's unconventional and literary writing style of natural preservation and nature engages in an active two-way movement in which humans and the natural environment work together in mutually sustainable ways. Ybarra's analysis also further draws a connection to Holzer's permaculture system as it attempts to do the environmental and spiritual work that both Holzer and Anzaldúa argue for, manifesting a positive social change by attempting to build a sustainable, mutually beneficial, and cooperative relationship with the natural environments and ecologies in which we live. Furthermore, permaculture ideologies and practices articulated by Holzer reveal the consciousness shift required for us to create a new environmental ethic in order to manifest positive social change: one that views and treats the natural environment as we would ourselves, as one that feels connected with the land, and one that attempts to work with nature in mutually sustainable and beneficial ways.

¹⁴⁷Ibid. p. 185.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR: A NEW ONTOLOGY OF PLANETARY CITIZENRY

You become reacquainted with a reality called spirit, a presence, force, power, and energy within and without. Spirit infuses all that exists—organic and inorganic—transcending the categories and concepts that govern your perception of material reality.

-Gloria Anzaldúa, “Now Let Us Shift”

Introduction

Spiritual activism does not stop by constructing an ethic with the natural environment, as I have shown. Another important aspect of spiritual activism’s transformative power is its new ontology or mode of being. In continuing to excavate some of the un(der)-explored and un(der)-developed themes in the secondary scholarship on Anzaldúa and spiritual activism such the epistemology of the heart and ethic of the environment, spiritual activism posits a new ontology or way of being which helps to further comprehend spiritual activism as well as see how its ontology lays the foundation for creating positive, substantial, and ever-lasting social change. Spiritual activism dictates a new ontology by imagining and experiencing an identity that is composed of the planet, others, animals, and surrounding material space itself, a self/other/planet schema. Spiritual activism offers a new interconnected ontology that endlessly produces innovative categories of identity.

Spiritual activism attempts to focus on commonalities while acknowledging the differences among various cultures and social systems. Spiritual activism creates a new malleable ontological category and sees human experience itself as means of attaining commonality and global alliance, going beyond categories of race, gender, class, or nation. In this chapter, I argue that spiritual activism offers us a new ontological category of world or planetary citizenry because it gives privileged and First World western citizens a radical means of creating positive social change by (re)orientating their worldview, identity, and mode of

being. This chapter, unlike the previous chapters, heavily analyzes and interprets Anzaldúa and her spiritual activism and engages in secondary sources that directly take up these themes and ideas. Furthermore, in order to understand this new ontology of world and planetary citizenry, I demonstrate how world or planetary citizenry incorporates or posits that: (i) self (personal) and global (political) transformation are intimately interconnected and that (ii) balance and healing are essential ideas in establishing interdependent identity-formations and sustainable communities.

Spiritual activism's holistic framework allows us to construct identities in multiple ways which extend beyond social, racial, sexual, national, and class distinctions and categories. It is an integrated model which allows us to synthesize a new epistemological-ethical-ontology matrix in order to construct a new world or planetary citizen. Moreover, spiritual activism recognizes an ontology of what Anzaldúa's calls a *world or planetary citizen*—one who acts and sees oneself as metaphysically interconnected with and composed of others, the natural environment, animals, and the planet itself.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, I argue that spiritual activism offers a radical means of creating positive social change as one experiences, feels, and acts upon a metaphysic of interconnectedness. However, to begin, I first must explain each section and its directive.

In section (i), I show how Anzaldúa prodigiously argues and suggests that self transformation and global transformation are intimately interconnected. That is, in order to create a positive social or global change, we need to first be the change we would like to see in the world. This idea is foundational to understanding spiritual activism and is seriously theorized and cited throughout *Luz en lo Oscuro (Light in the Dark)*. Thus, my main objective is simply to analyze, order, and describe how Anzaldúa and others theorized, conceptualized, and argued for

¹⁴⁹Ibid. p. 155.

such a synthesis and notion. Anzaldúa cites that in order to create a positive social change, one must paradoxically go inward and change oneself to actively change the outer structure of reality. We can therefore see an interesting and complex relationship between individual identity-formations and the global structure of space. Likewise, this section will contain secondary sources, primarily the work of AnaLouise Keating, that explicitly argue for and see this point that self transformation and global transformation are intimately linked, which Anzaldúa directly argues for. Moreover, this section will outline the strong interconnection between self and global transformation, enabling a two-way movement in which self-transformation leads to positive social and global transformation.

In section (ii), I suggest that world or planetary ontology acknowledges and maintains that balance and healing are both important ideas in reorganizing individual and collective identity-formations and establishing interdependent, non-oppressive and -exploitative, sustainable communities and societies. This section also explicitly and directly ties to Anzaldúa's writings and ideas themselves. I make no theoretical implications, and instead, I do the organizational work of citing when and how balance and healing are mentioned and used, acknowledging how fundamental the notions balance and healing are in spiritual activism and world or planetary ontology. In order to expand on our traditional ontological categories or transform them entirely, Anzaldúa argues that we need to heal our emotional and psychological wounds which have led us to feel and act as if we are metaphysically distinct, separated from one another. Balance is also another notion that is vital in understanding the healing process and establishing new interdependent communities and identity-formations, ones based on sustainably supporting social and natural systems. According to Anzaldúa, we need to rethink the role of balance and healing in creating healthy identity-formations and sustainable communities and

societies, decolonializing the current oppressive and exploitative model of neocolonialism and global inequality. Furthermore, I simply order Anzaldúa's arguments and thoughts to highlight how balance and healing are essential notions in creating positive social change, and hence contribute to constructing world or planetary ontology.

Spiritual Activism Recognizes the Ways Self Transformation Is Intimately Linked with Global Transformation

According to AnaLouise Keating in the preface of *Luz en lo Oscuro (Light in the Dark)*, Anzaldúa argues that the spiritual, material, physical, and psychical are inseparable aspects of a unified and infinitely complex reality.¹⁵⁰ Because of this, we are interconnected in ways we can't even imagine. It is, too, because of this, that the self, community, world interconnect in intense and powerful ways. To see these interconnections requires imagination—how inner activity and body and outer community and space coalesce. And this is what Anzaldúa wished to uncover in her last book. She states:

My text [*Luz en lo Oscuro*] is about the imagination...we are connected to el cenote via the individual and collective *arbol de la vida*, and our images and *ensuenos* emerge from that connection, from the self-in-community (inner, spiritual, nature/animals, racial/ethnic, communities of interest, neighborhood, city, nation, planet, galaxy, and the unknown universes).¹⁵¹

Anzaldúa is asking her audience to imagine for themselves the cavernous, unknown ways in which we may be interconnected on a communal, natural, and cosmic scale. She is intrigued and interested in 'dreaming' and the making of images to analyze problems and blockages, foretell current and future events, and actively establish under-explored and unknown connections

¹⁵⁰Ibid. p. xxx.

¹⁵¹Ibid. p. 5.

between lived experiences and theory.¹⁵² Moreover, I read Anzaldúa as importantly exploring previously unexplored connections that unite selves with others, our lived experiences with our theories, and the known with the unknown. Spiritual activism is the founding of an imagination that attempts to see the ways in which our psyches interacts with material reality, and from this, we develop new ontologies of what it means to be human on our planet, expanding on previously held identity-categories and -formations such as race, sex, class, gender, nationality, etc. to include social justice issues, the natural environment, the global community, and the planet itself.

Similarly, the notion of *Nepantla* is foundational in reimagining the spaces in between self and world. This bridge-making is the soul work that allows us to shift our consciousness and perspectives. *Nepantla* allows us to see things from two or more angles which can lead to a shift and control of the perception, to imagine and balance contemporary society's worldviews with non-ordinary worldviews.¹⁵³ *Nepantla* is where spiritual transformation and rebirth occur. Anzaldúa regularly speaks about recognizing and owning up to or taking responsibility for our individual 'shadows' or *deconocimientos* which make us headstrong and dig deeper into our own subjective positions, rejecting alliance-based approaches and attempts at reconciliation. These shadows are wounds because they keep us from contemplating our global condition, the ways our individual actions contribute to that condition, and the ways to healing and positive change.

She states:

When we own our shadow, we allow the breath of healing to enter our lives. Let's look at these events as catalysts that allow us to reframe global disasters, prompt us into remapping our priorities—figuring out exactly what we believe in, what our lives mean, and what our purpose is as individuals, as a nation, and as world citizens. Let's call on our inner resources to help us in times of rising and falling, peace and war, compassion and violence. Let's use internal and external conflict and wounds to enter the soul.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵²Ibid.

¹⁵³Ibid. p. 28.

¹⁵⁴Ibid. p. 22.

Anzaldúa furthermore illustrates the ways in which spiritual activism enacts the ability to reinterpret personal and collective events. It requires us to interweave our minds, hearts (emotions), and life forces (spirit) to actualize substantial social and lasting political change. It requires that we plunge into our internal and external wounds and conflicts in order to awaken and activate the soul in order to do the work needed to establish compassion for others and global peace. It sees the spiritual realm and political sphere as closely interconnected and uses inner resources and socio-political conflicts to establish lasting and peaceful change. Spiritual activism and its ontology of world or planetary citizenry is thus first and foremost a call to action because it requires that individuals actively go into the ‘self’ to create, invent, and materialize a better world in which we want to see and live, using conflicts and wounds as modes of transformation and substantial change.

In chapter six, “Now Let Us Shift,” Anzaldúa describes the path to *conocimiento* (knowledge) and its relation to self/global transformation. In great detail, Anzaldúa acknowledges and confronts an infectious globalization that has caused our current world’s dysfunctional state. She says:

All, including the planet and every species, are caught between cultures and bleed-throughs among different worlds—each with its own version of reality. We are experiencing a personal, global identity crisis in a disintegrating social order that possesses little heart and functions to oppress people by organizing them into hierarchies of commerce and power—a collusion of government, transnational industry, business, and the military, all linked by a pragmatic technology and science voracious for money and control. This system and its hierarchies affect people’s lives in concrete and devastating ways and justify a sliding scale of human worth used to keep human-kind divided. It condones the mind theft, spirit murder, exploitation, and genocide *de los otros*. We are collectively conditioned not to know that every comfort of our lives is acquired with the blood of conquered, subjugated, enslaved, or exterminated people, an exploitation that continues today. We are completely dependent on consumerism, the culture of the dollar, and the colossal powers that sustain our lifestyles.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵Ibid. p. 119.

Here Anzaldúa unabashedly objects to western modes of existences and its oppressive and ubiquitous power structure. She acknowledges a neocolonialism which has allowed power and money to dictate all and be in the hands of the corrupt few such as governments, industries and corporations, and militaries. She condemns the system of money in itself and its priority, prerogative of capitalistic and power-hungry pursuits and control over human life, animals, and the environment. She loathes the fact that we have lost connection with a deeper sense of ourselves, a deeper humanity which would abhor today's exploitative, derisive, and toxic condition. She is livid about the inner colonialization of our minds, spirits, and ideologies filtered by media's propaganda, instantiating a culture dependent upon rampant consumerism, entertainment, and radical individualism based upon the false expanding power of technology and commerce. She is critically attacking our current western identities and identity-formations, socio-political systems, and modes of being that cause global exploitation, genocide, subjugation, and environmental degradation. She criticizes our—individual U.S. citizens and the U.S.'s socio-political structures—collective dependency on power, control, consumerism, which supports neocolonial and global exploitation. Anzaldúa is attacking the current U.S. structure and its imperial, demeaning, wasteful, and un-sustainable means of production and being.

Furthermore, Anzaldúa is calling out our 'sliding scale of human worth,' or the ways we have valued power and money over the value and worth of human life, animals, and the environment. And in this way, she is continuing to analyze and put herself in between the space between individual action and its collective or global consequences, and she argues that we need to spend more time contemplating and recognizing the ways our individual actions lead to global catastrophe and vice versa, often citing our individual and collective responsibilities and neglect of those social responsibilities. Hence, Anzaldúa is analyzing the self, our identity-formations,

and ontology or modes of being which lead to world exploitation and degeneration. Anzaldúa suggests that we need to recognize the ways we ontologically define or understand the self and how it connects with the global condition and transformation and the ways global transformation, such as neocolonialism, constructs and conditions ideas of ‘self’ (consumer) which propagate these globally oppressive systems.

Anzaldúa continues to challenge us to break out of old mental patterns and emotional prisons and deepen our range of perception that allows us to see how our lives and actions are linked to others, contemplating the global order. She asks us to combine inner reflection and vision—the mental, emotional, instinctive, imaginal, spiritual, and subtle bodily awarenesses—with social and political action and lived experience to generate subversive knowledge and action.¹⁵⁶ Anzaldúa desires that we shift our consciousness and realities and develop ethical and compassionate strategies to negotiate conflict and difference within self and others, to find common ground by forming holistic alliances.¹⁵⁷ To include these practices and to act on our visions and beliefs is the very process of enacting spiritual activism which can transform our culture, as internal shifts lead to external changes, and self transformation leads to global transformation. It requires that we stretch beyond previous self-, culturally- imposed limits, to take responsibility for consciously co-creating our lives, spaces, and worlds—materially, emotionally, psychically—and become fully functioning human beings and contributing members of all our communities, one worthy and capable of self-respect, dignity, integrity, and love.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶Ibid. p. 120.

¹⁵⁷Ibid. p. 123.

¹⁵⁸Ibid. p. 136.

Anzaldúa, however, acknowledges that the retribalizing process will be a difficult one, expanding on traditional notions of identity and ontological categories such as race, ethnicity, nation, class, sex, and gender. The spiritual *mestizaje*'s main objective is to reject narrow and previously conceived categories of identity such as color, class, and career and to embrace identities in terms of the global and spiritual.¹⁵⁹ To retribalize our identities to include more inclusionary ones—a citizen of the world, embracing classifications on a planetary culture, condition, ecology, and scale. In this narrative, traditional boundaries dividing us from “others” break down, i.e. *nos/otras*, and we are allowed to reconceptualize and reimagine new possibilities amidst the cracks and holes.¹⁶⁰ These amendments reinforce and require both inner and outer resources in order to cultivate positive social change and sustainable social and natural systems. The inner/spiritual/personal dynamic causes changes in the social/collective/material realms.¹⁶¹ For Anzaldúa, we cannot meaningfully change either realm without actively working on both fronts, which (re)imagines how self and global transformation relate in the first place. World or planetary citizenry gives us a novel, imaginative, and effective means of revolution and ever-lasting change and peace, attempting to establish a harmonious global community incited by self-transformation.

Likewise, when projects do fail due to perceptual conflict or lack of transformative power, *la Nepantlera* calls on the connectionist faculty which allows us to see the common ground between all things and people, reasserting objective peace, harmony, and sustainability.¹⁶² Anzaldúa asserts:

¹⁵⁹Ibid. p. 141.

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

¹⁶¹Ibid.

¹⁶²Ibid. p. 148.

In gatherings where we've forgotten that the object of conflict is peace, la napantlera proposes spiritual techniques before we saw only separateness, differences, and polarities, our connectionist sense of spirit recognizes nurturances and reciprocity and encourage alliances among groups working to transform communities. In gatherings where we feel our dreams have been sucked out of us, la nepantlera leads us in celebrating la comunidad sonada, reminding us that spirit connects the irreconcilable warring parts para que todo el mundo se haga un paiz, so that the whole world may become un pueblo.¹⁶³

Anzaldúa's spiritual activism and world or planetary ontology attempt to create commonality, alliance-based activism, and peaceful global community. She is creating a space within herself and her audience's imagination to (re)invent a new and true 'progress' for humanity, one that resides in our ability to establish coalition, community, togetherness, and interconnectivity. Anzaldúa rejects separateness, difference, and dividedness when we attempt to transform or better our social situation. Anzaldúa and spiritual activism instead attempt to establish long-lasting peace and social alliances, to see the world as a global community. The work of spiritual activism is to constantly and ever-changingly be the bridge that connects all peoples and things—to envision and manufacture the spaces and ways in which coalition and coming-together is possible, and to make a declaration to nurture and embody a global community or family. It is what enables us to be compassionate toward the "Other," trying to dismantle racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of systemic oppression, not specializing any particular group, inching toward a more informed service toward humanity and freedom as a whole.¹⁶⁴ In this way, Anzaldúa is creating the intellectual, mental, and written space in which she sees how self affects global transformation: we, individually and collectively, must widen our service and concern for humanity at large, and we must embody the identities and actions that align with such ideologies and practices. Such a transition entails a great self/global transformation and is

¹⁶³Ibid. p. 149.

¹⁶⁴Ibid. p. 154.

described by its interactive process with a goal of establishing positive and ever-lasting social change.

Moreover, AnaLouise Keating directly explores Anzaldúa's radically inclusionary politics which deconstructs traditional ontological categories and examines the self-world transformational dynamic and interdependence which provide the ground for powerful and positive social change. Keating states:

Though most people self define by what they exclude, we define who we are by what we include—what I call the new tribalism. Significantly, Anzaldúa does not discount the importance of gender, ethnicity/race, sexuality, ability, and other identity-categories are too restrictive and cannot adequately define us. Indeed, she suggests that these identity-based categories renders the conventional labelings obsolete.¹⁶⁵

According to Keating, Anzaldúa rejects conventional identity-based politics and ontology.

Anzaldúa advocates a new tribalism which defines itself by what it includes, i.e. the various and endless 'worlds' we experience. This radical inclusionary politics, which Keating helps to unpack and describe, however does not outright discount traditional ontological categories; it questions whether these categories are sufficient in themselves to define us or to substantiate positive change, growth, and justice. It analyzes the ways in which these categories oppress, separate, subjugate, and become co-opted by other larger power structures such as class or neocolonialism. Keating helps us to define and understand the new tribalism as one that inherently includes instead of excludes. The new tribalism, as Keating describes it, is one that attempts to build a global community because it rejects the ways traditional identity and ontological categories subordinate or subjugate others. The new tribalism is one that defines itself by what it includes, all people, all animals, and all natural environments.

¹⁶⁵Keating, AnaLouise. "'I'm a Citizen of the Universe': Gloria Anzaldúa's Spiritual Activism as Catalyst for Social Change." *Feminist Studies* 34, no. 1/2 (2008). p. 62.

Furthermore, Keating and Anzaldúa depict their rejection of common identity-based ontology through the new tribalism, and ask us, instead, to embrace and experience wider malleable ontological categories which more accurately help to understand and deconstruct what we mean by world or planetary ontology—one that does not assume or essentially identify with any *one* ontological category. World or planetary ontology therefore depicts a radical inclusionary politics which requires us to be open to multiple and ever-changing ontological categories only insofar as they allow us to embrace, build, and experience commonalities and alliances among *all* citizens, not those that limit, separate, or politically siphon themselves off from others or the global community in the way that traditional ontological categories often do. And Keating's understanding of new tribalism support these points in Anzaldúa and help us to clearly understand new tribalism in terms of spiritual activism.

Anzaldúa and Keating both argue that self-change and social, global transformation are mutually interdependent enterprises. Keating asserts, “Anzaldúa insists that self-change should be an end in itself; instead this ‘recreation of the self’ must be part of a larger process requiring both intense self-reflection and back and forth action on individual and communal levels.”¹⁶⁶ Thus, Anzaldúa's self-recreative process, demonstrated by world citizens and planetary ontology, requires the openness to intense self-reflection and action and to experience, share, and empathize with oneself, others, and the worlds in which we travel. Thus, self-change and social-transformation are both intimately interconnected. This interaction represents the new ontological possibilities and categories that world citizens create, opening themselves up to the larger conceptual world community and global oppressive power structures. Keating also cites how *nepantla*, *nepantleras*, *nos/otros*, *conocimiento*, and spiritual activism are useful and

¹⁶⁶Ibid. p. 59.

powerful tools for social change, and that these theories have not received the scholarly attention they merit¹⁶⁷, further supporting the notions that Anzaldúa and her concepts are effective means of social change and deserve more research and analysis.

Similarly, Mohammad H. Tamdgidi argues that what makes Anzaldúa's public impact so effective is her thesis of the simultaneity of self and global transformations.¹⁶⁸ Tamdgidi suggests that it is Anzaldúa's highly reflexive and dialectic of understanding of the private and public spheres that shapes her sociological imagination and ability to construct new ontological categories and utopic visions for peaceful world community. Tamdgidi theorizes that Anzaldúa adopts a view of the self as both a unifying self-determining individual and as a social relation in itself—a diverse form of both self-relatedness and its interactions with the world:

To transform oneself from a colonized landscape of divided-and-ruled multiple selves into an integrated self-determining individuality in favor of a just global society, therefore, is not only a necessary step to broader global transformation, but is an exercise in global transformation in and of itself.¹⁶⁹

Tamdgidi describes the ways in which Anzaldúa's model of self/global transformation allows us to transcend binary self/other models in order to effectuate positive social change. He imagines self-determining individuals who then effectively instructs positive collective and global transformation and liberation. In other words, we must liberate ourselves and become integrated self-determining individuals with our communities (inner) if we are to upend global inequality and liberate the world community (structural). It is therefore the construction of self as intricately interconnected with the world that spawns new ontological and social possibilities. Self-liberation

¹⁶⁷See Keating, AnaLouise. "From Borderlands and New Mestizas to Nepantlas and Nepantleras: Anzaldúan Theories for Social Change." *Human Architecture* Vol. 4 (2006): 5-16.

¹⁶⁸Tamdgidi, Mohammad H. "'I Change Myself, I Change the World': Gloria Anzaldúa's Sociological Imagination in Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza." *Humanity & Society* 32, no. 4 (2008). p. 311.

¹⁶⁹Ibid. p. 329.

is thus inherently bound up with a project of global justice, (re)imagining and (re)constructing a self that works toward creating a globally just and peaceful community will recognize freedom, autonomy, independence, and self-determination in the individual subject. Self-transformation is thus a means of global transformation in and of itself, reconfiguring individuals to think more about their identity in terms of and the ways to global justice, liberation, and community.

And Tamdgidi and Anzaldúa further describe the project of planetary or world citizens—to liberate both the global community and the individual so that he or she can be self-determining and free, attacking the global structure of space, oppression, and inequality, which precludes human subjects from exercising freedom. Moreover, we see how planetary ontology views self and global transformation as inherently linked and interconnected. Self/global simultaneous transformation has the profound ability to manufacture positive social change by addressing global or collective injustice while giving agency, liberation, independence, and self-determination to individuals.

But we need more than just attacking or critiquing the global structures of oppression and subjugation. We need to be able to effectively (re)imagine and construct a new society capable of supporting world or planetary ontology and its aim of global and social peace and change. In a similar vein, Tamdgidi continues by arguing that Anzaldúa's liberatory social theorizing and praxis deeply depends on the notion of the simultaneity of self/global transformation *and* its social imagination. He indicates that this self/global dynamic involves the task of healing/transcending/bridging a vast array of habituated dualisms ingrained in our personal and global landscapes.¹⁷⁰ Utilizing Anzaldúa's sociological imagination and its transformative and energizing framework, he believes that the self/global transformative model is a *human right* and

¹⁷⁰Tamdgidi, Mohammad H. "Anzaldúa's Sociological Imagination: Comparative Applied Insights into Utopystic and Quantal Sociology." *Human Architecture* Vol. 4 (2006). p. 265.

that we can pragmatically apply it to our Gen Ed, colleges, and universities in order to advance a new framework of human architecture which involves the sociology of self knowledge, utopistics, and methodological, theoretical, and historical practical exercises in imaginative applied sociology.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, Anzaldúa's sociological imagination, such as her new tribalism, nos/otras, and planetary ontology, allows us to effectively (re)imagine social arrangements and orderings that support utopic and peaceful societies and communities and pragmatically apply them to our education systems.

Likewise, Anzaldúa recognizes how change and forms of resistance begin with the self-determining individual. Maria Lugones especially notes the ways in which Anzaldúa enacts inner resistance married with collective reimaginings. Lugones expresses how Anzaldúa's text *Borderlands/La Frontera* allowed her to occupy an internal position of resistance, also prescribing Anzaldúa project as liberatory, acknowledging the interconnection between inner and collective struggles and projects. She maintains:

As I understand the liberatory project, the inner and the collective struggles are not separable...A dismissal of the 'inner struggle' dismisses liberatory subjectivity. A dismissal of the collective 'moment' robs the struggle of the self-in-between of any liberatory meaning... Anzaldúa's desafío is about the creation of a new culture, an intimate and also and inseparable, a collective struggle.¹⁷²

Furthermore, Lugones embraces Anzaldúa's work as an account of the sociality of resistance. She also acknowledges the deep interconnection between self and global transformation, both of which are needed to truly develop a new project, new culture, new society. This new culture is indicative of and sustains the world citizen, one's whose project is intricately wrapped up in self and global liberation, justice, and transformation. Social resistance is inherently encoded in the

¹⁷¹Ibid. p. 284.

¹⁷²Lugones, Maria. "From Within Germanative Stasis: Creating Active Subjectivity , Resisting Agency" Ed. Keating, AnaLouise. *Entremundos/Amongworlds: New Perspectives on Gloria E. Anzaldúa*. Springer (2016). p. 97.

need to deconstruct and break down old oppressive ontological categories of race, ethnicity, sex, gender, class, etc. and oppressive systemic structures such as neocolonial globalization.

Other theorists also recognize and apply Anzaldúa's theories and methods to real-world, global problems. Kavitha Koshy suggests that Anzaldúa's work offer a different approach to activism that can be practically and effectively applied to transnational space, emphasizing a critical moment in transnational theorizing.¹⁷³ She, too, in an attempt to critically understand transnational experience in a globalized world, presents troubles in international politics that also perpetuate the misunderstandings and stereotypes of 'the Other' projected by Western, Eurocentric ideology in order to maintain systems of power and privilege, as Anzaldúa's works also attempt to decolonize notions of the Other and establish interdependent communities and nations. Hector Calderon recognizes the transformative power and shift in Anzaldúa's work and writings from *This Bridge We Call My Back* to *this bridge we call home*.¹⁷⁴ He notes the ways in which Anzaldúa incorporates more Mexican, indigenous, and Aztec philosophies and spiritualities, deepening our understanding of the context of commonality on cosmic terms and our connection to the earth's environment.¹⁷⁵ What's more, a variety of theorists are slowly beginning to employ and use Anzaldúa ideas of self/global transformation to pragmatically attack present-day oppressive regimes and provide hopeful, utopic, and collaborative alternatives for self-, communal- development and sustainability. These theories accept and incorporate Anzaldúa's simultaneity between self/global transformation. They wish to better our social condition in positive and substantial ways, which is the ultimate goal of spiritual activism and

¹⁷³See Koshy, Kavitha. "Nepantlera-Activism in the Transnational Moment: In Dialogue with Gloria Anzaldúa's Theorizing of Nepantla." *Human Architecture* 4 (2006): 147-161.

¹⁷⁴See Calderón, Héctor. "A New Connection, a New Set of Recognitions": From This Bridge Called My Back to This Bridge We Call Home." *Discourse* 25, no. 1 (2003): 294-303.

¹⁷⁵Ibid. p. 296.

world or planetary ontology. These shifts and uses of Anzaldúan theory provide hope in that they all incorporate social justice issues and attempt to deepen our senses of community and alliance-based approaches to contemporary and real-world issues, utilizing the connection between self/global transformation.

Moreover, self-change is a powerful effective means of global transformation in and of itself. And this opens the door to endless possibilities of enacting a positive social change through self-change, attempting first to be the change we would like to see in the world, deconstructing traditional ontological categories and reinventing new self/other/planet ontological categories which propagate inclusivity and global justice. Anzaldúa and others argue that self-change leads to global change, and that we must be the change we would like to see in the world, acknowledging our global oppressive condition and creating novel ontological categories which aim at establishing decolonized, peaceful, and harmonious societies.

Spiritual Activism Emphasizes Balance and Healing as Essential Notions in Establishing Interdependent Identity-Formations and Sustainable Communities

Along with the the thesis of the simultaneity of self/global transformation, world or planetary ontology and citizenry attempt to establish interdependent communities and relational identity-formations which will foster balanced, utopic, sustainable, and harmonious societies and communities. Anzaldúa suggests that balance and healing are vital components to self and global transformation. Without the process of healing, both individually and collectively, and balance, within social systems and individual health, we will not be able to construct more peaceful and interdependent communities and societies. However, balance and healing require a new epistemology and spiritual understandings. Anzaldúa proposes a new alternative for

knowledge-production and spirituality, what they entail, and their effect on identity-formations and forming interdependent communities:

I propose a new perspective on imaging and a new relationship to the imagination, to healing, and to shamanic spirituality...I enact spiritual mestizaje—an awareness that we are all on a spiritual path and share a desire that society undergo metamorphosis and evolution...This book explores the quest for greater consciousness and other dimensions of reality by challenging the basic premises on which our concepts are built...in other words, create a new reality. When we have access to this type of expanded perceptive universe, our viewpoint, identity, and character change, and we can no longer view the world as a constant.¹⁷⁶

Anzaldúa's perspective challenges us to create new senses of selves, new cultures, new social systems, new awareness of interconnectivity, and new realities. This creative process is embedded in the faculty of imagination, our relationship to it, and its healing and transformative powers. She advocates that we use this imagination to transform our identities and societies and heal our many wounds. Spiritual activism and spiritual mestaje's argue that we can no longer view reality as something stagnant, constant, or ontologically fixed. It changes as a consequence of our perceptions of reality, and Anzaldúa is searching for and counseling new perspectives which expand on and develop a new sense of self through its relationship to reality as a whole. Only when we can understand that change occurs when we challenge our fundamental understandings, worldviews, and relationship to reality can we genuinely alter it and construct new ontological realities and modes of being, i.e. world or planetary citizenry.

Because of this, Anzaldúa sees identity as a relational web, stretching and interconnecting space and time. She sees identity as constantly in flux and interconnected by the literal spaces that comprise our lives. Identity is malleable, flexible, and ever-changing. She imagines new coalitions that shatter simplistic colonialist notions of racial difference,

¹⁷⁶Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. p. 44-45.

exclusionary boundaries, and false binaries such as us/them; she asks us to move beyond externalized forms of social identity and locations such as family, race, gender, sexuality, class, religion, and nationality¹⁷⁷—instead she asks us to access deep experiences and abilities that can create innovative and inclusionary identities and politics. This requires that we personally and collectively transcend oppressive categories such as ‘us’ versus ‘them’. Anzaldúa offers us strategies for rewriting personal and collective identities in order to (re)imagine new social groups and spaces, new peaceful and harmonious social arrangements and orderings. She argues:

It’s not race, gender, class, sexuality, or any single aspect of the self that determines identity but the interaction of all these aspects plus as yet unnamed features. We discover, uncover, create our identities as we interrelate with others and our alrededores/surroundings. Identity grows out of our interactions...¹⁷⁸

Anzaldúa demonstrates how identity is an active process which grows from its relational and spatial surroundings and context. It interprets and puts together the pieces given by our culture that construct our Frankenstein-like identities composed of various and experientially distinct ontological categories. And when we mistakenly view our identities as solely fragmented and separated by race, gender, sexuality, class, etc., then we limit our ability to rewrite our identities, move beyond our current oppressive social structure, and transcend our view of reality.

In order to go beyond the current oppressive social structure, we must concoct new social paradigms which allow for collective growth. Anzaldúa suggests that we must move beyond restrictive cultural components and undertake the transformative work needed to process and facilitate evolving social groups, becoming an inherently extending tribe.¹⁷⁹ This new tribalism asks us to personally negotiate alliances among the conflicted forces within the self, between

¹⁷⁷Ibid. p. 173.

¹⁷⁸Ibid. p. 75.

¹⁷⁹Ibid.

men and women, among groups of different factions, among nation and the rest of the world.¹⁸⁰ These fissures and borders attempt to fragment and see oneself composed of many disparate parts. Anzaldúa forces us to imagine the ways in which we are both subject and object, self and other, have and have-nots, conquer and conquered, oppressor and oppressed.¹⁸¹ The clash between these binaries and cultural, social, political, and economic causes splits in the psyche, and leaves us in disarray. The new tribalism, on the other hand, is about being part of but never subsumed by one group or ontological category, never losing individuality to the group nor losing the group to the individual; this new tribalism is about working together to create new stories of identity and culture, to envision diverse, vibrant, and harmonious futures.¹⁸² It's about rethinking our narrative of history in order to catapult us into a new cultural story the world has never seen. In other words, it is about *healing* our fragmented identities, creating harmony and recognizing our constant balancing of various ontological categories in order to establish long-term peace and healthy interdependence among peoples, societies, and natural environments.

Spiritual activism, thus, asks us to imagine new ways of going through *nepantla*'s disorientation in order to heal and achieve wholeness, balance, and interconnection to others on the planet.¹⁸³ It demands that we plunge our hands into the hard work and mess of practical, material, political acts—changing behaviours, perceptions, and patterns. However, we must first activate *el conocimiento* to acknowledge the ways in which our worldviews, affectivities, and self-relations have been internally and externally colonized. This exposes the ignorance that assumes that dominant culture has the sole means of knowledge-production, recognizing its limitations and oppressive power structures. In order to establish balance and interdependence,

¹⁸⁰Ibid.

¹⁸¹Ibid. p. 79.

¹⁸²Ibid. p. 85.

¹⁸³Ibid. p. 90.

spiritual activism recognizes the individual and collective need of healing. Spiritual activism creates the spaces and times for healing to happen, which nourish our souls; meditation, prayer, artist works of creation can generate the transformative force needed to heal our fragmentations, wounds, and false notions of dualities. Similarly, Anzaldúa calls on us to do the ‘soul work’ needed to heal ourselves so that it may extend to others, animals, and the planet. If we, individual human subjects, are not in the process of healing and transforming, then we cannot produce the power needed to positively change our world, worldviews, and perceptions of reality. In this way, transformation, self and global healing, and space are highly interrelated. Self-healing allows us to construct other forms of solidarity and balance, attempting to create wholeness within ourselves which allows us to create holistic and sustainable systems—embracing and mirroring the two-street of self/global change.

The spiritual activist is thus able to transcend this self-healing and inner transformation into material and political action. They do the work of establishing solidarity and interdependence: “Solidarity work demands a global, all-embracing vision. Let nosotras (without the slash) be el nuevo nombre de mujeres que escapan de jaulas, who struggle with and for differences, who carry differences without succumbing to binaries.”¹⁸⁴ And how are we to survive these wounds, struggles, and confrontations? By applying what we learn to our daily activities, our relationships with ourselves, with others, with the environment, with nature.¹⁸⁵ Anzaldúa demonstrates the ways in which spiritual activists *apply* and practice the spiritual knowledges we receive, attempting to design a global vision that embraces and considers all. Spiritual activism challenges us to apply what we learn about the world in order to build a

¹⁸⁴Ibid. p. 91.

¹⁸⁵Ibid.

prosperous environment and society for everyone and everything on the planet, ensuring no harm comes to any living and non-living thing.

Nepantleras also give us the ability to manifest creativity in itself. Nepantla, the symbol for this transitional process, is the bridge between movement itself, e.g. in the culture, in the brain, etc.¹⁸⁶ Nepantla is the space between our conscious and unconscious, states of consciousness, inner to outer world, self and world, imagination and reality's harshness.¹⁸⁷ According to Anzaldúa, Nepantla is the eternal liminal space that allows us to break down old binaries, to deconstruct old boundaries, traditional ontological categories, worldviews, etc. and imagine new reconfigurations and patterns. To imagine the infinite possibilities between these spaces, and to enact new modes of being in the world. Nepantlas, nos/otras, and spiritual activists are shapeshifters, constantly shifting and balancing between perspectives, cultures, worlds, and experiences in order to transcend consciousness and other ways of living. Spiritual activists and Nepantleras must however first enact a degree of self-organization, healing, and balance themselves if they are to transform our societies, communities and worlds.

For example, in chapter five, "Putting Coyolxauhqui Together," Anzaldúa uses her body and the writing process as metaphors of C.I.'s process of change, balance, and self-organization. She uses her body and chronic illness as examples of how one organ affects the others, attempting to view systems as both self-organizing and interdependent wholes. She says:

What you've learned from you body and chronic illness that you can apply to the creative process is that change in one part of organ triggers adjustments in all other parts. You've become aware that being out of control and in extreme disequilibrium prompts self-organization and a return to balance. You've learned that writing about writing is more about life than it is about writing; that writing mirrors the struggles in your own life, from denial to recognition and change; that writing illumines your fears and dreams.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶Ibid. p. 108.

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

¹⁸⁸Ibid. p. 115.

Anzaldúa is offering a meta-analysis of illness that engages in an inner conversation with her body, her writing, and with her audience. She acknowledges the work needed to maintain self-organization and self-balance, using her body as an example for how we can view larger social and natural systems. If one part of a system is dysfunctional, diseased, or chronically damaged, then the larger organizational structure will suffer disequilibrium and inevitably fail. Therefore, balance is vital in maintaining any self-organizing system such as the atom, the cell, the organ, the body, the social system, the ecosystem, the solar system, the galaxy, the universe, etc. Balance is required to make any self-sustaining and -organizing system work. Anzaldúa also continues to explain and use writing as an artistic means of self-organizing and returning to balance, translating the disequilibrium of life and events. Writing can mirror our internal struggles for balance and maintains our emotional, psychological, and bodily lives. The writing process itself, in the way Anzaldúa brings to life, requires a degree of self-organization and constant return to balance and wholeness if we are to change and affect change for others. Individual bodies themselves need emotional, mental, and bodily balancing if larger social, cultural, natural systems too are to function healthily and be sustainably interdependent.

Another important point that Anzaldúa makes is that the spiritual activist must be aware of and constantly in the process of self-healing, self-rejuvenation, and overall self-care in order to be an effective agent of social change. Anzaldúa states:

She [nepantleras] realizes that to make changes in society and transform the system, she must make time for her needs; the activist must survive burnout. When the self is part of the vision, a strong sense of personal meaning helps in identity and culture construction. By developing and maintaining spiritual beliefs and values, la nepantlera gives the group hope, purpose, identity.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹Ibid.

Anzaldúa furthermore demonstrates the need for individual spiritual activists to make time for his or her needs in case of ‘burnout’. Anzaldúa explicitly suggests that daily living, struggles, and oppressions will wear one down and cause inner disruption, constantly evoking the C.I. process. Thus, spiritual activists must set time for themselves so they can achieve or maintain bodily, emotional, psychological, and spiritual balance, sustainability, and good-health. The spiritual activists are able to empower themselves by connecting with their inner balance and sense of wholeness which inspires others to action. The spiritual activist is able to be leader and source of hope, purpose, and identity precisely because one cares for the self, demonstrating a care and incorporation of healing and balance that extends to the global community. To allow oneself the material, emotional, and psychological space needed to heal, maintain balance, imagine, and empower oneself is pivotal to avoid complacency and ignite and sustain positive social change—being an example, vessel, inspiration, and source for positive and substantial social change.

Furthermore, healing and balance are essential notions in establishing spiritual activism and the ontology of planetary ontology. Healing and balance are thus inextricable ideas that help us to construct interdependent and sustainable identity-formations and communities. These central notions importantly ground the spiritual activist project of positive social and global change and help describe the new ontology of planetary or world citizenry. Healing serves to mend both individual and collective systems, making them more sustainable and balanced, allowing us to transform and move into wholeness and communities and societies to achieve balanced interdependence. Balance must be understood both within individuals, such as emotional, psychological, and bodily health and within larger social and natural systems, necessitating a healthy cooperation between peoples, societies, natural environments, and

denouncing exploitative, neocolonialized, and unbalanced forms of commerce, production, agriculture, and resource distribution. World or planetary citizenry depict the goals and aims of spiritual activists—to cultivate a positive social change by expanding on traditional identity categories and imagining novel ontological possibilities and categories that support and sustain world peace and positive social transformation grounded upon constant balancing and healing.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

I have attempted to highlight the underlying and un(der)-explored and un(der)-developed themes and concepts within Anzaldúa's later writings which articulately depict and describe the concept of spiritual activism in new scholarly and philosophically interesting ways. I have argued that in analyzing these themes in Anzaldúa we can uncover her epistemology, ethics, and ontology which can lead to positive, substantial, and ever-lasting social change and that her spiritual activism is a call to embrace her epistemology, ethics, and ontology in order to incite action and transformation in others. I have argued that each of these themes or chapters plays an important role in enabling that positive social change. I have also attempted to bring to light how spirituality and spiritual activism are central themes in Anzaldúa's overall philosophy and thinking, hoping to fill the intellectual and conceptual gaps in the secondary work and scholarship done on Anzaldúa, particularly in her later writings. I have used Anzaldúa both as an exemplar of spiritual activism and as arguing for its theoretical structure by analyzing her writing, arguments, and personal experiences, particularly in her final work, *Luz en lo Oscuro* (*Light in the Dark*).

I have also attempted to expand upon and apply spiritual activism's rich theoretical structure to some of today's world-problems by incorporating the neurocardiology and new means of agriculture in permaculture methodology, both of which are ideas Anzaldúa does not directly address or discuss. Instead, I have attempted to employ spiritual activism to these phenomena because I believe they fall in line with the theoretical tenets of spiritual activism and because they help us to unpack the powerful ways spiritual activism leads to positive, substantial, and ever-lasting social change. I have employed spiritual activism and its theoretical implications in an attempt to better understand the ways we have been culturally, geographically,

economically, emotionally, and psychically constructed and systematically oppressed. This recognition allows us to analyze the oppressive structure in our current neocolonial globalized situation. This recognition also allows us to transcend new categories of self/global identities which address the problems of the epistemic injustice of spirituality in Anzaldúa scholarship and neocolonial globalization. Using spiritual activism as my theoretical nexus, I hoped to develop a basic framework that adduces Anzaldúa's other working concepts in order to conduct qualitative research because they adequately address the intersectionality of our current global problems and needs. More specifically, I have illustrated the ways in which Anzaldúa's spiritual activism gives us a new epistemology of the heart, ethics of the environment, and ontology of what she calls world or planetary citizenry.

'Inner works, public acts'¹⁹⁰ epitomizes spiritual activism's dictum in that in order to change the world, we must first change ourselves. It attempts to establish a holistic framework in which we can see the social, political, cultural, psychical, emotional, etc. as inherently spiritual and interwoven problems that are intimately tied to one another. In hoping to illuminate, build upon, and apply this rich theoretical framework, I have also argued that spiritual activism allows us to synthesize a new epistemological-ethical-ontological matrix that integrates self transformation with global transformation in order to create positive, substantial, and ever-lasting social change. I have, more specifically, shown how spiritual activism constructs a new epistemological-ethical-ontological worldview in three ways:

In "Chapter Two: A New Epistemology of the Heart," I have argued that spiritual activism gives us a new epistemology of the heart by describing: (i) the emotional heart and (ii) the energetic/spiritual heart. Because Anzaldúa acknowledges the problem of epistemic injustice

¹⁹⁰Ibid. p. 117.

in the form of emotional and spiritual oppression stemming from western academia and western modes of thinking, she and her spiritual activism recognize a radical need for a different kind of epistemology. Scientific rationality's hegemonic dominance in western ideology and academia has understood spirituality, emotionality, and personal history as distinct and inferior ways of knowing in contrast to the pure abstraction of intellectual and scientific reasoning. And this chapter goes through a thorough investigation of what Anzaldúa means when she says that our heart possesses its own intelligence or intellect, as I attempted to unpack and distinguish the various, multi-faceted ways she uses and theorizes heart.

Avoiding emotionality and affectivity in theorizing represses ways in which we can know, act, and relate to the world. Spirituality and change in this way requires both intellectual, intuitive, and emotional intelligence and the openness to emotionality, others, the world (the emotional heart). Similarly, Anzaldúa acknowledges the spiritual or energetic dimension of the heart and its ability to reach and link to others. I have suggested that Anzaldúa would agree with and incorporate new scientific understandings of the heart and its bioelectromagnetic field which hypothesizes that it may play a more vital role in relaying information and for accessing other deeper ways of sensing, intuiting, knowing, and communicating (the energetic/spiritual heart). In this way, the heart provides a powerful heuristic for deepening our understanding, abilities, and potentialities for the heart and its ways of knowing and instantiating empathetic connection. The heart and its epistemology is also found to play a more pivotal role in healing, and is thus foundational in our discussion of the spiritual activist and transformation.

This openness to emotionality and experience themselves is an essential component to theorizing and self-transformation according to Anzaldúa and thus salient in the ways in which we understand her spirituality and un(der)-explored and un(der)-developed themes surrounding a

new heart epistemology. My goal has thus been to make Anzaldúa's ideas about the heart—as well as the environmental and planetary citizenship—more explicit, robust, and apparent to her readers and general scholarship and to highlight spiritual activism's and the heart's profound ability for acquiring new knowledge that enables positive transformation. While being far from conclusive, I hope this thesis outlines and provides a basic analysis and understanding of Anzaldúa's theory of the heart, which is versatile, multi-faceted, and multi-functional and has thus far been overlooked in the secondary scholarship on Anzaldúa.

Secondly, in “Chapter Three: A New Ethic of the Environment,” I argued that Anzaldúa's spiritual activism implicitly gives us a new ethic of the natural environment because it recognizes (i) the current oppressive and neocolonial global structure of space in which we live and (ii) permaculture ideologies and practices as a means of healing and attaining sustainability. Anzaldúa recognized an increasingly neocolonialized world which propagates environmental degradation, resource inequality, and economic dependency and exploitation. These modes of domestic and international relations diminish the possibility of self/communal liberation, radically inclusionary politics, and ecological, environmental, and agricultural sustainability. These modes of un-sustainable agriculture, I have argued, leads spiritual activists to implicitly advocate for permaculture methodologies and ideologies. That is, Anzaldúa's ideas about the natural environment lead us to embrace and utilize permaculture ideology and practice, and thus it is a theoretical implication and application of her work which I explicitly make and argue for.

Like the new heart science, Anzaldúa does not directly cite permaculture agriculture or its implications. Rather, I am drawing this theoretical conclusion from spiritual activism and Anzaldúa's later works, believing a permaculture ideology and practice—a means of setting up agriculturally sustainable and permanent natural systems—results from analyzing Anzaldúa

theories concerning nature, space, spirituality, and identity. Thus, I again hoped to make Anzaldúa's ideas about nature and environmental ethics more theoretically comprehensive and distinct by critically applying them to our agricultural systems. Upon doing so, a permaculture methodology and practice helps to understand and develop spiritual activism by giving us a concrete example, alternative, and critical application. I also wish to underscore its salience and role in the overall goal of spiritual activism and establishing positive social change.

Lastly, in "Chapter Four: A New Ontology of Planetary Citizenry," spiritual activism has given us a new ontology of planetary or world citizenry by highlighting the interrelationship between (i) self and global transformation and (ii) balance and healing in establishing interdependent identity-formations and sustainable communities. Anzaldúa has foreseen the neocolonial and capitalistic geopolitical system as the internal colonization of our bodies, minds, spirits, and hearts. Neocolonial global structures have also stunted the psychic, emotional, and spiritual growth of humanity at large, exacerbating social injustices between First World and Third World countries and causing grave environmental degradation and exploitation. In order to combat these injustices, spiritual activism offers an integrated framework for (re)imagining self identity with collective and global identities in what she calls a world or planetary citizen, or citizen of the universe.¹⁹¹ Her work, furthermore, depicts a vital need for re-conceptualizing self/global identities, which views self transformation as a means of and intimately linked with political activism and global transformation.

These new modes of beings challenge the underlying global structure of social injustices such as the epistemic injustice concerning spirituality, growing environmental degradation and exploitation, and neocolonial globalization in order to manifest positive social change for the

¹⁹¹See Keating, AnaLouise. "I'm a Citizen of the Universe": Gloria Anzaldúa's Spiritual Activism as Catalyst for Social Change." *Feminist Studies* 34, no. 1/2 (2008): 53-69.

world at large. World or planetary citizenry posits a metaphysic of interconnectedness in which one views him- or her-self as intimately interconnected with others, animals, the natural environment, and the planet itself. And this (re)conceived idea of the self addresses the current oppressive structure of individual- or self-identity and our problems today—e.g. western identity-formations that see the individual as metaphysically disconnected from others, animals, the environment, and the planet itself. Balance and healing are also essential notions in establishing new individual and collective identity-formations which focus on finding a commonality for all, prompting us to heal and find balance within ourselves if interdependent and sustainable communities and societies are to form and properly function.

Furthermore, spiritual activism provides an epistemological-ethical-ontological matrix, which I have argued, has the power to substantially transform our identities, cultures, and social systems. We can transform our identities, cultures, and social systems if we reorganize our self-identities to act and feel as if we are metaphysically and spiritually interconnected, decolonializing western identity-formations and socio-political systems. This perceptual change within each individual will see to it that we reconfigure our lives so that no harms comes to others, for they *are* us, and we are them, if we contemplate, enact, and embody a global and humanitarian project which attempts to create a more metaphysically connected, harmonious, balanced, peaceful, and utopic world community. And I have suggested that these under-explored and under-developed themes lying beneath Anzaldúa's later corpus of works provides the groundwork for manifesting ever-lasting, positive social change.

This thesis is a testament to Anzaldúa's profound theorizing, writing, and inspirational style and tone. As Linda Martin Alcoff notes, Anzaldúa's work invites us to reach beyond the usual conventions of academic writing, to make visible the relations between self and world,

feeling and thinking, personal experience and theory.¹⁹² The goal of theory for Anzaldúa is revolution and radical social transformation, and that its reflection is only useful insofar that it leads to the disruption of everyday life in the current climate of globalization and oppression.¹⁹³ Likewise, as Chela Sandoval phrased it, Anzaldúa is a ‘theorist of hope,’ whose visions for future transformations were bold and always already present in her own theory and practice of consciousness.¹⁹⁴ Long-time friend Emma Perez echoes these sentiments when she suggests that “long after the end of this century, her [Anzaldúa’s] philosophy will endure. Gloria was an unassuming philosopher-poet whose words will inspire generations...[and] she look[s] to the past to excavate hope for our future.”¹⁹⁵ In addition, a long-time companion, ‘writing comadre,’ and editor of Anzaldúa’s last and posthumously published book, AnaLouise Keating strongly advises that we seriously (re)consider Anzaldúa’s work and theories as important for theory and action in the 21st century and that we ought to continue to study and build upon her work. This one idea of spiritual activism has inspired and given me the freedom and flexibility to excavate, analyze, and build upon Anzaldúa’s prolific works in order to motivate and inspire others to better our social condition, realities, and lives. This thesis has followed from Keating passionate remarks in which she gives me the fortitude to use and build upon Anzaldúa’s works and her transformative and powerful ideas:

I hope that this material [Light in the Dark] will enable scholars to retrace Anzaldúa’s thinking, develop rich analyses and interpretations of Anzaldúa’s words, and in other ways build on her work—creating new Anzaldúan theory...especially highlight[ing] Anzaldúa potential contributions to twenty-first-century philosophical thought because I

¹⁹²Alcoff, Linda Martín. "The Unassimilated Theorist." *PMLA* 121, no. 1 (2006). p. 255.

¹⁹³ Ibid. p. 259.

¹⁹⁴Koegeler-Abdi, Martina. "Shifting Subjectivities: Mestizas, Nepantleras, and Gloria Anzaldúa’s Legacy." *MELUS* 38, no. 2 (2013). p. 71.

¹⁹⁵Pérez, Emma. "Gloria Anzaldúa: La Gran Nueva Mestiza Theorist, Writer, Activist-Scholar." *NWSA Journal* 17, no. 2 (2005). p. 9. This is also a reference and supports the ways in which Anzaldúa incorporates Ancient, indigenous philosophies.

believe that her outsider status leads many scholars to ignore this dimension of her work.¹⁹⁶

This thesis is a direct result and reaction to Keating's imploration. Anzaldúa's works have been underappreciated and too-often ignored.¹⁹⁷ And it is my hope and goal of this thesis to do exactly this: to keep Anzaldúa's theories, ideas, and life relevant and alive in academia, and to develop her work in order to help further create a positive change of which she passionately advocated for throughout her life. Keating powerfully reminds us of Anzaldúa's shift from conventional categories of identities such as race, color, class, career to and in more global-spiritual terms, as she reveres Anzaldúa's last work and project:

How will readers answer Anzaldúa's call for new approaches to identity, 'Fresh terms and open-ended tags that portray us in all our complexities and potentialities'? What connections will we make between these identity-related expansions and the ontological decolonialization on which they are based? *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro—Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality* invites us to consider these questions and many others. This book broadens Anzaldúan scholarship and shifts conversations in new directions, demonstrating that Anzaldúa is a provocative philosopher of the highest caliber, weaving together mexicana, Chicana, indigenous, feminist, queer, tejana, and esoteric theories and perspectives in ground-breaking ways.¹⁹⁸

And it is my hope, that this thesis continues Keating's and Anzaldúa's project of global decolonial liberation and global peace and harmony, as well as philosophically and critically develop the core of some important notions which support these goals, to uncover un(der)-explored and un(der)-developed themes and concepts and build upon insights that have been overlooked and underdeveloped in the secondary literature on Anzaldúa's works, and to pragmatically help better our lives and world in the 21st century.

Anzaldúa convincingly describes the art and act of spiritual activism and the greater duty we—who are privileged individuals in the U.S. and in the western, developed world—have to

¹⁹⁶Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro*. p. xxviii.

¹⁹⁷Ibid. p. xxix.

¹⁹⁸Ibid. p. xxxvii.

others, our natural environment, and global community. She passionately states, “This *conocimiento* motivates you to do work actively to see that no harm comes to people, animals, ocean—to take up spiritual activism and the work of healing. Te entregas a tu promesa to help your various cultures create new paradigms, new narratives.”¹⁹⁹ This declaration attempts to decolonize western stories of patriarchy, hierarchical control, fear and hatred of women and people of color, domination over nature, the false expanding power of science and technology, unsustainable commerce, hyper-consumerism, and excessive individualism—to denounce old destructive powers of living, and provide new narratives that embody new possibilities, to recognize that the body is rooted in the earth like the cell is to the body, that our cultures are like the organs of the earth needing to work together to properly function, that our experiences are shared among all people and habitats like our flowing life-giving blood, that spirit, feeling, body, and nature collectively create a larger identity and ontological category a category that attempts to work with all people, animals, the environment, and the Earth itself, i.e. a world or planetary citizen.

This new epistemology of the heart, ethic of the environment, and ontology of world or planetary citizenry depicted by spiritual activism gives us the theoretical tools needed to understand, unpack, and positively transform today’s world problems. Anzaldúa gives me hope and inspiration knowing that she fought for justice and nature with her pen—her symbol for intellect, body, heart, and spirit. Spiritual activism gives me the language and framework needed to more comprehensively and passionately articulate why I believe my actions make a difference and why I believe that I must first embody the change I wish to see in the world. Given this outline, I have better understood and given a new impetus and meaning to my activism: my

¹⁹⁹Ibid. p. 138.

veganism, my minimalism, my growing education, and my belief in social justice. And it is with this hope, and the ultimate aim of this thesis, that this new theoretical apparatus will allow others to powerfully inspect, theorize, and articulate their interconnected philosophies, beliefs, and acts of social resistance against global oppressive power structures. Spiritual activism furthermore gives me the drive and inspiration needed to believe that one day humanity will learn to love, honor, respect, and harmoniously live with all living things, including all peoples, all animals, all organisms, all ecosystems and the Earth itself. But we must start now. Activate spirit. Transform yourself. Transform the world.

REFERENCES

- Alcoff, Linda Martín. "The Unassimilated Theorist." *PMLA* 121, no. 1 (2006): 255-59.
- Andrade, Luis M and Robert Gutierrez-Perez. "Bailando Con Las Sombras: Spiritual Activism and Soul Healing in the War Years." *Qualitative Inquiry* 23, no. 7 (2017): 502-04.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands : The New Mestiza = La Frontera*. 1st ed. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. Duke University Press, 2015.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Making Face, Making Soul = Haciendo Caras : Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color*. 1st ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Foundation Books, 1990.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria and AnaLouise Keating. *Interviews = Entrevistas*. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria and AnaLouise Keating. *This Bridge We Call Home : Radical Visions for Transformation*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Bastian, Michelle. "The Contradictory Simultaneity of Being with Others: Exploring Concepts of Time and Community in the Work of Gloria Anzaldúa." *Feminist Review* 97, no. 1 (2011): 151-67.
- Calderón, Héctor. "" A New Connection, a New Set of Recognitions": From This Bridge Called My Back to This Bridge We Call Home." *Discourse* 25, no. 1 (2003): 294-303.
- Castillo-Garsow, Melissa. "The Legacy of Gloria Anzaldúa: Finding a Place for Women of Color in Academia." *Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe* 31, no. 1 (2012): 3-11.
- Corbin, Michelle. "Facing Our Dragons: Spiritual Activism, Psychedelic Mysticism and the Pursuit of Opposition." *Human Architecture* 4 (2006): 239.
- Elenes, C. "Nepantla, Spiritual Activism, New Tribalism: Chicana Feminist Transformative Pedagogies and Social Justice Education." *Journal of Latino/Latin American Studies* 5, no. 3 (2013): 132-41.
- Gutierrez-Perez, Robert (2017) Anzaldúa, Gloria E. *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*., *Women's Studies in Communication*. 40: 3, pp. 306-308.
- Henderson-Espinoza, Robyn. "Gloria Anzaldúa's El Mundo Zurdo: Exploring a Relational Feminist Theology of Interconnectedness." *Journal for the Study of Religion* 26, no. 2 (2013): 108-18.
- Holzer, Sepp. *Permaculture*. Chelsea Green Publishing. 2004.

- Keating, AnaLouise. *Entremundos/Amongworlds: New Perspectives on Gloria E. Anzaldúa*. Springer, 2016.
- Keating, AnaLouise. "From Borderlands and New Mestizas to Nepantlas and Nepantleras: Anzaldúan Theories for Social Change." *Human Architecture* 4 (2006): 5.
- Keating, AnaLouise. "'I'm a Citizen of the Universe': Gloria Anzaldúa's Spiritual Activism as Catalyst for Social Change." *Feminist Studies* 34, no. 1/2 (2008): 53-69.
- Keating, AnaLouise. "Speculative Realism, Visionary Pragmatism, and Poet-Shamanic Aesthetics in Gloria Anzaldúa—and Beyond." *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (2013): 51-69.
- Koegeler-Abdi, Martina. "Shifting Subjectivities: Mestizas, Nepantleras, and Gloria Anzaldúa's Legacy." *MELUS* 38, no. 2 (2013): 71-88.
- Koshy, Kavitha. "Nepantlera-Activism in the Transnational Moment: In Dialogue with Gloria Anzaldúa's Theorizing of Nepantla." *Human Architecture* 4 (2006): 147.
- Lara, Irene. "Bruja Positionalities: Toward a Chicana/Latina Spiritual Activism." *Chicana/Latina Studies* (2005): 10-45.
- Martin-Baron, Michelle R. (2016) *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, by Gloria Anzaldúa and edited by AnaLouise Keating, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 18:4, pp. 623-625.
- McCaughan, Edward J. "Notes on Mexican Art, Social Movements, and Anzaldúa's" *Conocimiento*." *Social Justice* 33, no. 2 (104) (2006): 153-64.
- McCraty, Rollin. "The Energetic Heart: Bioelectromagnetic Communication within and between People." *Bioelectromagnetic Medicine*. New York: Marcel Dekker (2004): 541-62.
- Moraga, Cherrie and Gloria Anzaldúa. *This Bridge Called My Back : Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Expanded and rev. 3rd ed. Women of Color Series. Berkeley, CA: Third Woman Press, 2002.
- "Neocolonialism." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, www.iep.utm.edu/neocolon/#Hb.
- Ortega, Mariana. "This Thin Edge of Barbwire:" Selves from the Land in the Middle." *Latino Studies* 2.3 (2004): 298-303.
- Pérez, Emma. "Gloria Anzaldúa: La Gran Nueva Mestiza Theorist, Writer, Activist-Scholar." *NWSA Journal* 17, no. 2 (2005): 1-10.
- Pitts, Andrea J. "Gloria E. Anzaldúa's Autohistoria-Teoría as an Epistemology of Self-Knowledge/Ignorance." *Hypatia* 31, no. 2 (2016): 352-69.
- Tamdgidi, Mohammad H. "Anzaldúa's Sociological Imagination: Comparative Applied Insights into Utopystic and Quantal Sociology." *Human Architecture* 4 (2006): 265.

- Tamdgidi, Mohammad H. "'I Change Myself, I Change the World': Gloria Anzaldúa's Sociological Imagination in Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza." *Humanity & Society* 32, no. 4 (2008): 311-35.
- Tirres, Christopher D. 'Spiritual Realities and Spiritual Activism: Assessing Gloria Anzaldúa's *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro*', *Diálogo*, vol. 21/no. 2, (2018), pp. 51-64.
- Ybarra, Priscilla Solis. "Borderlands as Bioregion: Jovita Gonzalez, Gloria Anzaldua, and the Twentieth-Century Ecological Revolution in the Rio Grande Valley." *Melus: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the US* 34, no. 2 (2009): 175-89.