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## De manera errante: Forging Decolonial Paths

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***De manera errante: Forging Decolonial Paths***

Senior Project submitted to  
The Division of Social Studies  
of Bard College

By  
Wailly Comprés Henríquez

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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*Para mi mamá, Johanny, a quien le debo y se merece todo.*

*Para ti, Yohely, for letting me be the intermediary between your Shadow-beast  
and our culture that does not want to experience the rebel in you.*

*Para Leonidas Antonia Hernández y Dionisio (Jhonny) Rafael Comprés*

*La muerte llegó, seduciendo su encanto  
    Envolviendo su manto  
La muerte llegó, seduciendo su encanto  
    Y te fuiste pa'l campo  
Libre serás para siempre, para siempre  
    Mariposa morada entre [caoba]<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Natalia Lafourcade, Los Macorinos. “Rocío de todos los campos.”

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## Introduction

### Laying the Ground from Where We Should Speak

There was a conversation that began with Hamid Dabashi essay, “Can Non-Europeans Think?” (2013).<sup>2</sup> With this polemical essay, a series of critiques began to emerge, included were several European thinkers who categorized the essay as an aberration, because according to Santiago Zabala, for instance, he, among other scholars, were being accused of Eurocentrism. Zabala responded to the essay arguing that, Dabashi’s accusations were false since the philosophers and thinkers from Europe whom he has cited are all “counter-hegemonic” (Dabashi 3).<sup>3</sup> In other words, Zabala, a research philosophy professor at the University of Barcelona, was perplexed that thinkers who are clearly pushing against cultural and structural power could be accused of Eurocentrism.

Dabashi writes later that when Walter Mignolo, who teaches at Duke University and writes about the decolonial option and coloniality, critiqued his text he took his critique into serious consideration because Mignolo proposed in his analysis a way of delinking from Eurocentrism that nobody else had been able to point out yet.<sup>4</sup> Mignolo would describe delinking at this moment, as a mode of engaging with *pensamiento propio*. Delinking translates into epistemic disobedience. In other words, not the rejection of continental philosophy, in this case, but a way of thinking on one’s own and find *el pensamiento propio*. This is concept coined by

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<sup>2</sup> Hamid Dabashi is an Iranian Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature at Columbia University in New York City. He is also a prominent voice within the Postcolonial Studies tradition. A tradition that focuses on the effects of imperialism and colonialism at a cultural, institutional and psychological level as well as the effects it had on the individual, especially colonized peoples.

<sup>3</sup> In this context hegemony appears here as Antonio Gramsci would use it. In other words, to the ways in which power and domination are intertwined with culture and thus are not perceived as forces that need to be reacted against. There are several layers to the concept but Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist intellectual, first utilized the concept to refer to the cultural revolution that needed to happen in Italy since they possessed a weak economic force to deliver a revolution. Therefore, Marxism could only exist culturally rather than economically.

<sup>4</sup> For more on the debate and controversy refer to Hamid Dabashi’s book *Can Non-Europeans Think?*

Rodolfo Kusch implies “losing the fear of thinking on one’s own” (Mignolo xxi). This bracketing of the other then provoked a shorter and more specific response to what this discourse was causing from Slavoj Žižek who responded to Mignolo’s essay with an eloquent “Fuck you, Walter Mignolo” (Dabashi 1). This moment was the epitome of the upsetting nature of what delinking implies for the European other. When Dabashi and Mignolo entered this new realm, they lay the ground for me of what it would mean to think with or think through writers who disregard the Eurocentric gaze when thinking of their notions of knowledge and cultural production.

Delinking from Eurocentrism is not just a bitter intellectual position that one adopts but a decolonial mode that incites an inward fixation on our forms of thinking. But what do I mean by decolonial? I first encountered the term in the first non-Eurocentric philosophy class I took at Bard, Caribbean philosophy. I was drawn to ideas such as “colonial difference” as it appears in Walter D. Mignolo’s essay “The Colonial Difference and Philosophy.” But as much as this idea pulled me into philosophy, or, more specifically outside of philosophy (since it is decolonial), it was not until a week before I began writing this introduction while at a conference, that I understood my relationship to philosophy as a whole.

On April 14 of the present year (2018) I attended a conference on pedagogy at Fordham University. I was sitting in a room with academics, graduate students and future teachers who, like me, are interested in improving the classroom experience for other students through a radical lens. In a broader sense, one of the primary objectives of the conference was to discuss how to decolonize the classroom and to think beyond the ideology of Paulo Freire; the “go to” pedagogue from the Global South known for pushing for a dialogic teacher-student relationship in the classroom. We focused on experiencing what it would mean to teach difficult texts through

popular (but also accessible) means of learning.<sup>5</sup> By combining *literatura de cordel* with Foucault, we engaged with the text by asking questions and creating something tangible to accompany it. It was upon the following reflection with the facilitator, Doris Sommer, a Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures and of African and African American Studies at Harvard University, that we articulated the notion that by doing this we were engaging in knowledge production through our means.<sup>6</sup> From here I began to understand my role as an undergraduate student pursuing a degree in philosophy at Bard College.

Throughout the conference, I was reminded of when I first encountered philosophy in my life contained in the literary works of Julio Cortázar and Jorge Luis Borges. Philosophy was essential to understanding their work because there is an underlying notion of the “Other” that was important when thinking of their literature. For their work, the other was usually communicated through the duality of oneself. Meaning, moments in which one is estranged from one’s own body. It was this first experience that pushed me to further my studies in philosophy. However, it is interesting to me to believe that in this culminating product of my undergraduate career, I engage with philosophy by delinking from it. I am engaging in philosophy through unconventional practices that are reflective of how philosophy has been practiced over the years in Latin America. In this particular case, mythology is the *cordel* (the regional practice) while Foucault is a symbol for philosophy (what I am engaging in while delinking from it). My focus is not so much the Eurocentric component, but more importantly on what is the product of such

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<sup>5</sup> One particular practice that day was to read excerpts from *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) by Michel Foucault combining it with the Brazilian popular practice of *Literatura de Cordel*. This method allowed for the worker’s class in Northeast Brazil to publish their literature by hanging them on a string.

<sup>6</sup> The “us” in this sentence pertains to the notion that most individuals attending this conference were Latin American and identify some of the practices as collective.



delinking. Moreover, I am concerned with what happens when we stop thinking about what the delinking from and begin to engage in this delinking instead to understand what it produces.

Based on my research and understanding of what it means to delink from something to link into something else, I observed mythology, when used as a *Cordel*, being an essential component of a decolonial mode.<sup>7</sup> When I refer to mythology, I refer to the construction of divine/religious/legitimizing narratives that appear in the consciousness of the nation to affirm their identity. Therefore, mythology is a way of engaging in philosophy, meaning that myths could be a form of decolonial philosophy.

The literature on mythology within Latin American thinking articulates colonization as something that is not frozen in time in the ways that it talks about national identity and culture. The recontextualization and transfiguration of mythology through time is a precious cultural tool that points at the necessity to delink from colonialism. This need breaks away from the notion that colonialism was a specific moment in history and instead allows it to be viewed as a logic that continues to exist even after political decolonization. The current literature on the topic refers to this as decoloniality. Anibal Quijano and Walter D. Mignolo are two of the many intellectual figures who discuss this term in depth. Building from them, I am trying to use specific strategies of disconnection that (Third-World) thinkers have utilized to escape the logic of colonialism (coloniality).

I have divided this project in three different chapter that aim to draw a clear picture of how errantry, a concept that is essential for the dialogue on roots (e.g. culture, race, etc...) is at work in Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/la frontera* as she attempts to reconstitute Mexican culture

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<sup>7</sup> I am using *Cordel* as a symbol that represents popular thought.

through her analysis of the myth of *la Malinche*. In chapter one, I show the colonial aspects of the myth by outlining the structure of coloniality. Chapter two offers an understanding of errantry; the formal philosophical framework Anzaldúa utilizes in her analysis of the myth. Lastly, chapter three is a close reading of Anzaldúa's reading of *la Malinche* to characterize how her engagement with mythology makes her work decolonial.

To go more into detail about the arguments, chapter one introduces the reader to the myth of *la Malinche* alongside the current literature on coloniality. By connecting the two (coloniality and *la Malinche*), I argue that *la Malinche* is a symbolic abstraction that enters the Mexican context as a colonial construct. I discuss how the reinterpretation that Gloria Anzaldúa does of the *la Malinche* myth is a philosophical engagement since it follows the parameters of what Walter D. Mignolo categorizes as decolonial philosophy. In other words, I aim to argue that philosophy is a local practice that exists beyond disciplinary norms.

The second chapter of my thesis introduces the concept of errantry, a hallmark of decoloniality—to further interpret Gloria Anzaldúa's philosophical project. Using Édouard Glissant's conception of errantry as presented in *Poetics of Relation*, I argue that the colonized self in Latin America and the Caribbean embody their history and identity through the philosophical work of mythology. Since errantry proposes that the self finds itself at unrest, then in exile and culminates in an (epistemological) return to what she has left behind, later in this chapter, I explore how Gloria Anzaldúa's errantry allows the philosopher to uncover decoloniality through the act of removal and transgression of philosophical and physical borders established by both academia and culture respectively.

Lastly, in chapter three I do a close reading of the representation of *la Malinche* in Anzaldúa's book, *Borderlands/la frontera*. First, I look at two images that capture the fluidity of

the representation of *la Malinche* creatively: the first painting is *Cortés y Malinche*, by José Clemente Orozco painted as a mural in 1926 and the second painting is titled *El sueño de la Malinche*, by Antonio Ruíz (1932). The first mural depicts the colonial aspects of the representation of the myth, while the second focuses on the essential role that the same myth has played in the development of national culture since she is depicted as the foundation upon which Mexico was built. With those two representations at hand, I present Gloria Anzaldúa's reconstruction of *la Malinche*, which is an appropriation of what these two paintings capture. Errantry argues that the individual finds at unrest with herself before the second stage is reached (exile); this is often referred to as a sacred motivation in Glissant's work.<sup>8</sup> I argue that Anzaldúa displays a disturbance (unrest) with herself the moment she disrupts the narrative of *la Malinche* and declares that culture is a colonial construction. Later, I present Anzaldúa's conception of the Shadow-beast as a mythical representation of the the embodiment of history and identity in Anzaldúa's life. In other words, I argue the Shadow-beast is the result of what Walter Mignolo categorizes as the colonial difference.<sup>9</sup>

Gloria Anzaldúa's mode of thinking is the most philosophical when she engages in the revisiting and remaking of mythology. In her decolonial project, she adopts an errant form/practice that I believe is a hallmark of decolonial philosophy. Mythology is one mode that reveals the side of the negotiation where the philosopher practices a form of decolonial philosophy. The work of Édouard Glissant, Aníbal Quijano, and Walter D. Mignolo help create a framework to better understand *Borderlands/la frontera* as a decolonial philosophical project.

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<sup>8</sup> A clear representation of what is sacred behind Anzaldúa's work is located in the chapter titled "Tilli, Tlapalli / The Path of the Red and Black Ink" in *Borderlands/la frontera*. "I write the myths in me, the myths I am, the myths I want to become" (Anzaldúa 93).

<sup>9</sup> The colonial difference: the moment in which hegemony confronts the subaltern perspective.

*La gente Chicana tiene tres madres.* All three are mediators, *Guadalupe*, the virgin mother who has not abandoned us, *la Chingada (Malinche)*, the raped mother whom we have abandoned, and *la Llorona*, the mother who seeks her lost children and is a combination of the other two.

Ambiguity surrounds the symbols of these three “Our Mothers.” *Guadalupe* has been used by the Church to mete out institutionalized oppression: to placate the Indians and *mexicanos* and *Chicanos*. In part, the true identity of all three has been subverted—*Guadalupe* to make us docile and enduring, *la Chingada* to make us ashamed of our Indian side, and *la Llorona* to make us long-suffering people. This obscuring has encouraged the *virgin/puta* (whore) dichotomy.

**“Entering into the Serpent” from *Borderlands/La frontera*  
by Gloria Anzaldúa (53)**

I spent the first half of my life learning to rule myself, to grow a will, and now at midlife, I find that autonomy is a boulder on my path that I keep crashing into. I can’t seem to stay out of my own way. I’ve always been aware that there is a greater power than the conscious I. That power is my inner self, the entity that is the sum total of all my reincarnations, the good woman in me I call *Antigua, mi Diosa*, the divine within, *Coatlicue-Cihuacoatl-Tlazolteotl-Tonantzin-Coatlatlopeuh-Guadalupe*—they are one. When to bow down to Her and when to allow the limited conscious mind to take over—that is the problem.

***La herencia de Coatlicue / The Coatlicue State from Borderlands/La frontera*  
by Gloria Anzaldúa (73)**

## 1. Chapter One: The Ground in Which We are Standing: *la Malinche*

*La Malinche* exists outside of time: she is a complex symbol for Latin Americans but particularly more for Mexicans and Chicanos that has not changed much through time. *La Malinche*’s tale exists in the Mexican context mostly through multiple artifacts and eye-witness accounts which later wrote about her. The most widely known historical aspect of the vital role she played in facilitating the Spanish Conquest of Mexico is aiding Hernán Cortés to defeat Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin (Moctezuma, the last Aztec leader standing). Because of her forced migration to Tabasco, being given away to Cortés as a domestic slave in 1519 and the fact that she lived in the borderlands of Aztec and Mayan empire, she was able to communicate in Nahuatl (the native language of the Aztecs), Spanish and some Mayan language (Schuman 2).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> There is not one single Mayan language and the official information as in which one *la Malinche* spoke is unclear.

Therefore, some of the eye-witness accounts established that her ability to translate from Castellano into Mayan and Nahuatl was perhaps the one single most painful actions she has taken against her people. Her name is associated with the betrayal of Mexico for the Spanish (Schuman 1). Furthermore, and as a matter of concluding her context, she also was in a relationship with Hernán Cortés with whom she had a child. This child is considered to be the first mestizo<sup>11</sup> person born in the soon to be Mexican land.

As a myth, she has represented both the birth of modern Mexico and the destruction of its ancient past. Since there is not a written account of *la Malinche* that was written by herself, the account I have provided above is merely the way her tale has transgressed time and appeared into our present discourse.<sup>12</sup> All available accounts exist in an imaginary that is more than often oral or as told by someone else in written reports *de la colonia* and thus following the logic of a specific time/era. In revisiting her myth, although one can't find her account, one can still begin to inquire into the dynamics that are at play in her account as told by others. In other words, how is it that a single human being can be assigned the power and burden to represent an entire nation? *La Malinche* is a mystified image and a product/consequence of her time. The structure of colonization is at play in her image and symbolic power. I will now explore the ways in which *la Malinche* has historically existed inside a narrative constructed during colonization.

### 1.1 La Malinche as a Product of Colonization

Because of the nature of this entire project, the reader is expected to be a little familiar with the historical context surrounding the conquest of Mexico. I have referenced before, that *la*

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<sup>11</sup> A mix between Spanish and Indigenous. More information on racial categories in Mexico can be found here

<sup>12</sup> To know more about *la Malinche* you can refer to Natalie I. Schuman's Senior thesis. Schuman '17 is an Alum at Bard College. Schuman, Natalie Irene, "Woman as Dialect: La Malinche in the Construction and Re-Construction of Post-Colonial Mexican Identity" (2017). *Senior Projects Spring 2017*. 342. [http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj\\_s2017/342](http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2017/342)

*Malinche*<sup>13</sup> represents the logic of a specific time and era; the word logic being understood as how people in colonial Latin America were thinking of cultural production, social organization, race, and pedagogy. I state this because later in this chapter I explore how she is the symbolic representation of the negatives aspects of Coatlicue, a mystical deity of the Aztec people. I argue that this reduction and symbolization of *la Malinche* is colonial because of how the logic of colonialism enters its construction, a movement I explore in this chapter.

A thorough understanding of what I mean by this logic informing the way in which *la Malinche* exists in the imaginary revolves around three central concepts: coloniality, colonial difference, and the colonial matrix of power. The colonial matrix of power is understood as the logic that allowed for the unfolding of Western civilization. Moreover, the colonial matrix of power is the place of origin for coloniality and the colonial difference. The term is coined by Aníbal Quijano, a Peruvian sociologist and humanist thinker whose work is highly influential in the decolonial studies and critical theory fields in Latin America.<sup>14</sup> The concept of the colonial matrix of power can be briefly defined as the survival of the “hegemonic structures of power and control” (Stojnić 105) that were established during the colonial era in the Americas. In this particular chapter, I seek to fully understand the concepts utilized by thinkers such as Walter D. Mignolo and Aníbal Quijano in their endeavors within decolonial studies. By exploring these concepts, we can begin to observe a relationship between the logic I am setting up to discuss and the notion of *la Malinche*. Coloniality informs culture, and *la Malinche* is an essential cultural

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<sup>13</sup> Chapter three of this project is dedicated exclusively to how Gloria Anzaldúa deals with the myth of *la Malinche*. In it, I am doing a close reading of her myth. For now, the reader should be able to understand chapter one as the logic that informs her myth as it appears here.

<sup>14</sup> Decolonial studies refer to the group of Latin American scholars that make the use of the term decoloniality as a critical tool within Ethnic Studies. Another interesting category within this movement is Latin Americanist, a group I came to identify with a lot.

hallmark for Mexico. However, when I explore the concept of the colonial difference it is visible that *la Malinche* in and of itself carries with her a notion of the subaltern perspective, a perspective Anzaldúa seems to rescue. I make use of the myth of *la Malinche* because we (those who investigate *la Malinche*) encounter the colonial influence of hegemonic structures of control and power aforementioned in conflict with an ancient perspective (*Coatlicue*) that has been transfigured. To conclude, I propose that by departing from philosophical rules of looking at mythology we can begin to delink<sup>15</sup> from normative philosophical approaches and begin to build new ways of decolonial approaches.

## 1.2 Colonialism vs. Coloniality

The intellectual community of Ethnic studies that emerged in the midst of the Cold War approximately in the 1960's captures the survival of the "hegemonic structures of power and control" in one term: coloniality. This concept was important because it allowed for the Ethnic studies scholars to articulate the contemporary ways in which colonialism still affects colonized people. I first encountered coloniality as a concept in Walter Dignolo's essay included in Eduardo Mendieta's anthology *Latin American Philosophy: Currents, Issues & Debates* titled "Philosophy and the Colonial Difference." The essay begins to outline the pervasive nature of colonialism while demonstrating how it exists as coloniality. Dignolo argues that the era of colonialism in the Americas followed a logic, or more specifically a model, that survived the era beyond the centuries that Latin American and Caribbean nations were under colonial rule. He calls this coloniality. At first glance, the concept is not intuitive, for it is hard to grasp how colonialism has been carried through time and has remained unchanged. One answer is found in a concept that has always been present in Latin American and Caribbean thinkers since the

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<sup>15</sup> Delink as conceptualized by Walter D. Dignolo.

Conquest: modernity. Modernity has allowed for coloniality to exist undetected with the intellectual history of Latin America. It will be important for the remainder of this essay to remember the Eurocentric nature of modernity. However, I do not focus on modernity as much as I focus on how mythology is the sand that slipped through the hands of Latin American and Caribbean philosophers as they tried to grasp its philosophical value.<sup>16</sup> Mythology is essential for decolonial studies because, in its studies, the philosopher can uncover how it has functioned as a container for the transmission of modernity/coloniality.

I was first drawn to exploring *la Malinche* because in doing so, I began to observe that her myth helps subvert epistemic and physical coloniality in Latin American discourse. Understanding this disruption relies on an understanding of the difference between colonialism and coloniality. The former refers to the historical period that extended from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries while the latter refers to the contemporary relations of power.<sup>17</sup> It is imperative to draw this distinction because not only was colonialism a historically physically violent period but also it was epistemically violent as well. Consequently, the New World's epistemic endeavors, such as their oral tradition, suffered a great deal when it came to their legitimacy and further down the road, the merit they received by the structure that was put in place. Therefore, when the scholars that belong to the Decolonial Studies field refer to coloniality, they refer to the effects that such violence had long-term as it informed the way that modernity appeared in Latin American and Caribbean nations.<sup>18</sup> I seek to explore the myth of *la*

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<sup>16</sup> In this part I will be introducing mythology as a concept philosophical endeavor but we will not see much of it until chapters two and three since now I am only trying to outline that it has not been present in the discourse for decolonial philosophy. Nonetheless, through Gloria Anzaldúa we can observe that mythology is a hallmark of decoloniality.

<sup>17</sup> Most Latin American and Caribbean countries obtained their political independence in the 1800's.

<sup>18</sup> Perpetuating the same kind of violence through different means. "Coloniality is the underbelly of modernity" Mignolo.



*Malinche* as a highly modern philosophy, and an in-depth exploration of it will introduce us to the current theories on subverting current power relations both epistemically and physically—decoloniality.<sup>19</sup>

### 1.3 Symbolization of *la Malinche*

The origin and evolution of *la Malinche* as a symbol is a consequence of colonialism. She has a symbolic presence over the Americas that has to do with her universality. Meaning, that *la Malinche* is a colonial representation of the New World. Her image is representative of the mixture of the New World and the Old World (or Western society). A vision of modernity is on the horizon of such view. Her image is supposed to represent the beginning of new nation/racial category, and although it did, in its oversimplification, her narrative stripped away some of the philosophical capacity mythology had for the Aztecs. In other words, *Coatlicue* for instance, whom I explore further in Chapter three captures Aztecs notions of ambiguity and dual existence. The primary example of this shift is represented in the unchanging narrative of *la Malinche* despite time and political decolonization in Mexico and most Latin American countries.<sup>20</sup>

The attentive reader might be curious as to why the narrative hasn't changed much in the Latin American imaginary. In my experience tracking some of its reiterations, I have observed that her myth continues to carry with it the hegemonic power relation of the time. Assuming gender roles as we know them are exported from Europe, then *la Malinche* fits the model perfectly. With her myth, nations such as Mexico have drawn the *virgen/puta* dichotomy that

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<sup>19</sup> This implies not only that mythology is philosophy as I see it, but that it is a form of decolonial philosophy in the way that philosophers are returning to it.

<sup>20</sup> Although the myth has been repurposed by different groups, the narrative has remained as it first appeared which is as I presented it at the beginning of the present chapter.

only negatively affects people's views of women. The role of gender underlying her myth allows for the cultural hegemony of Western civilization to remain unquestioned. It is the role of coloniality to normalize a narrow view of gender that can be presented as universal to the world because of its simplicity. Let us look at the literature in colonialism and its consequences to delve more into the complexity of her myth and the structure of colonialism. The Peruvian humanist thinker and sociologist Aníbal Quijano, a major scholar in all the literature regarding the thinking of colonialism and its repercussions writes in "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,"

In the beginning colonialism was a product of a systematic repression, not only of the specific beliefs, ideas, images, symbols or knowledge that were not useful to global colonial domination, while at the same time the colonizers were expropriating from the colonized their knowledge, especially in mining, agriculture, engineering, as well as their products and work. The repression fell, above all, over the modes of knowing, of producing knowledge, of producing perspectives, images, and systems of images, symbols, modes of signification, over the resources, patterns, and instruments of formalized objectivized expression, intellectual or visual. (Quijano 169)

Quijano envisions colonialism as a specific time in history that produced models and systems of control and dominance disguised with a vision of totality, as if the particular all relates to the main core: the all—Europe.<sup>21</sup> This logic is informed by a global colonial project and a vision of

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<sup>21</sup> Going forward when I refer to model I refer to the process of systematic repression such as the abstraction of knowledge as to eradicate its popular nature, and the use of symbols to represent a totality (a vision of the altogether stemming from one root).

totality. In other words, Quijano believes that colonization is simply a result of a global project that leads to global domination—the colonial matrix of power. Think of colonization as the action or series of actions that is/are required for a specific global (European) project. If colonization implies repression of knowledge as a primary requirement for the global project to be fulfilled then that act needs a logic to follow, a certain model to follow. This model is unique to colonialism, a moment where empire building became a European project and was portrayed as a universal endeavor. This history is not kept frozen in time. The model to follow was conceived at this time, and as Quijano states, the repression took place not only in a geographical space but also at an epistemic level (Quijano 169). Thus, it was pervasive, taking over the modes and production of knowledge of the colonized. Latin American as the geographical area I am referring to, utilized and followed the model unconsciously way after colonization. Quijano named the underlying and pervasive timeless presence of colonialism: coloniality.

Mythology, as a narrative that is constructed over time by local communities in order to connect to the land or unite people, exists under the realm of what Quijano called “[the mode] of producing knowledge, of producing perspectives, images, and systems of images, symbols, modes of signification” (Quijano 169). The myth of *la Malinche* encompasses all of that production. If the repression of mythology, as a mode of knowledge production, happened as a consequence of colonialism then, *la Malinche* exist as an unambiguous symbol. The reduction of *Coatlicue* to *la Malinche* shows she wasn’t repressed but created; she is a production of knowledge to transmit colonial ideas.

The importance of symbols in colonialism makes for *la Malinche* the perfect symbol for the Mexican nation to be built upon since she represents a synthesis, a union of the West with the New World—the symbol of expansion. Another prominent figure that can help identify the

underlying structure of colonialism is Ángel Rama, an Uruguayan literary critic known for his work on *modernismo*. Rama points out the importance of universal symbols within the European epistemic model. Symbols, then, become truths, or in other words, representative of the logic of the totality, such as the cross to represent all Christianity, rather than a mode of knowing.

The function of universal symbols in Latin America was to rob subaltern (local) symbols of any local interpretation to promote a single universal message. Ángel Rama writes, "la primera aplicación sistemática del saber barroco, instrumentado por la monarquía absoluta (la Tiara y el Trono reunidos) se hizo en el continente americano, ejercitando rígidos principios: abstracción, racionalización, sistematización, oponiéndose a particularidad, imaginación, invención local" (Rama 13). [The first systematic application of baroque knowledge, instrumentalized by the absolute monarchy (the unified image of the Tiara and the Throne) was made in the American continent, exercising rigid principles: those of abstraction, rationalization, systematization, opposing particularity, imagination, and local invention].<sup>22</sup> The Tiara and the Throne appear as symbols of parts of the colonial matrix of power. In other words, baroque thinking as a current of thought uses those two symbols to capture within one model the entirety of the world placing Europe at the center. Though the baroque extended for almost two centuries, this statement reads practically analogous to Quijano's conception of coloniality or the system of colonialism. Rama attributes the beginning of such colonial mode in the American continent denoting that nothing has been done before that quite resembles the repression of the Americas. The Latin American imaginary was transfigured from local invention to abstraction in order to belong to such vision of totality. It was systematized to be universal and to not allude to the imagination but to rationality. There, in that space, *la Malinche* was born and with her a

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<sup>22</sup> My translation.

colonized cosmology/vision of Mexico and Latin America. She became a symbol of the Americas. In her body, Mexico came into existence. It was birthed. *La Malinche* denotes the beginning of history—a history of Western expansion.

Walter Mignolo will begin to utilize Aníbal Quijano's earlier conception of coloniality to build his own theories that further explain the systems at play within *la Malinche's* myth. In them, Mignolo will begin to be critical of culture as a whole by referring to it as a colonial construction that produces friction between the hegemonic truth and the subaltern perspective. To the best of my knowledge, I take it that Mignolo arrives at this conclusion by utilizing two concepts that emerged from earlier postcolonial theory: the double bind and the colonial difference. The former makes an allusion to extremes within thought, while the latter is the space created by such extremes—the space in between (Mignolo 82). *La Malinche's* myth exists in this double bind: two extremes. Her story has been stripped of particularity and ambiguity, reduced to being extremely compliant with Hernán Córtes,<sup>23</sup> but she is also the foundation of the nation. She is the mother of all Mexicans, a responsibility she is blamed for creating for herself. This double bind makes her myth a polarizing tool. She is either good or bad.

This form of polarization feeds into what, as far as the scholarly literature is concerned, coloniality does. Colonial thinking has a vision of totality (Quijano 179). In other words, things either belong to the totality, or they don't. It is this vision of a global colonial project (totality) that makes of America a continent that was reduced to its physical labor because it did not fit within the European cosmology. Therefore, the continent and its symbols were reduced to their labor or their function in order to continue pushing forward the cogs of baroque thinking.

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<sup>23</sup> By allowing herself to birth a mestizo child or being explicitly against Aztecs when she aided Córtes to successfully culminate his colonial project

Thinking that sought to knit everything together by means of eliminating nuance, locality, and plurality. *La Malinche* is a product of this form of thinking. Traditionally, she exists in either of the extremes. To rethink her myth is to reject the extremes and embark on a new project.

Mignolo argues for a form of thinking that seeks to construct a detour from the colonial road (delinking). Moreover, delinking *la Malinche* myth from coloniality by means of alternative forms of knowing that stem from the colonial difference.

#### 1.4 The Colonial Difference

The colonial difference is often referred to as figurative place from where thinking happens. This thinking has often been colonized. The thinker is the colonized. The colonized intellectual thinks from the colonial difference, in other words from where their thinking is deviant from that of the colonizer due to a clash between subaltern knowledge and hegemonic “truths.” In the prologue of his book *Local Histories/Global Designs*, Walter Mignolo explores coloniality of power through the lenses of Aníbal Quijano, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Édouard Glissant,

The colonial difference is the space where coloniality of power is enacted. It is also the space where the restitution of subaltern knowledge is taking place and where border thinking is emerging. The colonial difference is the space where local histories inventing and implementing global designs meet local histories, the space in which global design have to be adapted, adopted, rejected, integrated, or ignored. The colonial difference is, finally, the physical as well as imaginary location where the coloniality of power is at work in the confrontation of two kinds of local histories displayed in different spaces and times across the planet. (Mignolo ix)

Within epistemic delinking underlies a desire for the restitution of subaltern knowledge.

Meaning that there must be a retrieval of that which has been lost. *La Malinche* is a borderland for the movement into subaltern knowledge production. Within her myth underlies the colonial difference, the borderland from where Latin American philosophers can begin to delink. She produces a glimpse of the local history of her people, not the Mexican people since there was no such thing as a nation in her time, but her people from Painala. By offering this glimpse, *la Malinche* exist in the border of the colonial difference where the local history of Painala, the myth of *Coatlicue* and the universal vision of womanhood, and the colonial imposition of dichotomy merge in conflict. In this way, *la Malinche* is both subaltern while colonial. It is because of this constructed borderland that border thinking emerges.

Mignolo is well aware that border thinking is the consequence of the colonial difference, meaning that colonialism precedes such thinking. His conception of border thinking then establishes that such border thinking is only put in motion and existence by an earlier occurrence of colonization that overtakes the modes of knowledge production (Mignolo x). Therefore, the colonial difference introduces the subaltern perspective and puts it in an epistemic war against hegemonic discourse. Border thinking as the logical consequence of the colonial difference is fractured since by means of existing in the border creates a dialogic relationship between universal and local, or ideology and perspectives (Mignolo x). *La Malinche* is a prime case to investigate further this claim since more contemporary research and literature on her myth attempt to think from the borders by reclaiming mythology as a form of thinking that either resembles philosophy or is philosophy itself.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> If we define philosophy as a process of thinking through something systematically—linearly from a single root.

Mignolo's "Philosophy and the Colonial Difference" concludes with his reflection on this form of philosophy I attempt to investigate further by thinking through the myth of *la Malinche*. Mignolo writes that "to think from the colonial difference means, today, assuming philosophy as a regional practice and simultaneously thinking against and beyond normative and disciplinary regulations" (Mignolo 85). To find a place for mythology within the normative conceptions of what constitutes philosophy is exactly that which Mignolo writes. It is to think against and beyond disciplinary norms. It is to begin a journey that in one way goes against the root of what we call philosophy; in other words, it goes away from Eurocentrism.



*In a similar fashion, Carlos Sanchez, in his article, "Philosophy and Post-Immigrant Fear," highlights the fact that the demand for disembodied philosophizing as a marker for what counts as philosophy is one of the ways professional philosophy is inhospitable to "Hispanic philosophers, and "Hispanic philosophy." He writes, many professional philosophers believe "if a thinking situates itself, embodies itself, or historicizes itself, then it is not profound, and worse, not philosophy" (Sanchez 2011, 40). The value of disembodied, a-historical philosophical engagement is clearly not a value shared by either Sanchez or Marcano for converging and diverging reasons. These are but a few examples of the myriad ways a sense of incongruence plagues many diverse practitioners within professional philosophy. No matter its origin I suggest that part of what forms these senses of incongruence is a failure to accept a justifying norm or a given set of justifying norms prevalent within professional philosophy context.*

**“How Is this Paper Philosophy? Kristie Dotson**

## **2. Chapter Two: Errantry as a Methodology**

It has been the task of Western epistemology to locate Latin American and Caribbean thought somewhere in its taxonomy. However, the concept of Latin America has only been in our vocabulary since 1850. Therefore, to begin to describe it as producing one specific kind of knowledge becomes a complex task. Kristie Dotson presents us with the very problem of taxonomy, understood as the classification and oversimplification of people, their culture, and practices to fit within Western models. She highlights Carlos Sanchez’ comments regarding a certain philosophical removal from history and lived experiences. This demand for a-historicizing and disembodiment of philosophy is a common practice among professional philosophers, Dotson writes later. Although unspoken, this demand for a removal from history is reflected through Latin American and Caribbean philosophy underrepresentation in professional philosophy. Moreover, the passage highlights formal (Eurocentric) philosophers’ desire for order, transparency, and a sense of distance from the physical world. In fact, Latin American and Caribbean writers have taken specific steps in order to embody philosophy and anchor it in history (Carlos Alberto Sanchez). Latin American and Caribbean philosophy has put Western taxonomy in brackets. In the 20th century intellectuals who were concerned with this question of

philosophical identity began to write philosophy that ranged from particular theories of knowledge to questions about action and how to act. This was particularly common in the making of national discourses and cultural production. In order for Latin American and Caribbean thought to fit into the Western model, the thought itself needed to be bent and rearticulated. Its anchoring in history and the embodiment of experiences would make the form of thought fall short and not meet the model. I propose a way of looking at Anzaldúa's work as a decolonial attempt to make the Western model feeble and outdated. Anzaldúa does so by stripping *la Malinche* myth from its colonial origins.

Stripping the myth of *la Malinche* from its colonial origins is made possible because Latin American and Caribbean philosophy towards the 20<sup>th</sup> century began to follow a deviant path from Eurocentric thought despite its close relationship with Europe. Through the works of intellectuals such as Enrique Dussel and his commitment to Philosophy of Liberation, which emerged during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the primary concern of 20<sup>th</sup>-century intellectuals of the region was to anchor their thought in their present circumstance. In that sense, a unique philosophical identity was created which was critical of colonialism, imperialism, and globalization. By embracing the fact that it would not meet the philosophical held standards, Latin American and Caribbean thinkers (both in the U.S. and their respective countries) would resort to an escape. A self-removal from the culture to engage in new perspectives and diverse thought. My primary concern in this chapter is to explore the decolonial approach that this philosophy adopted. In order for this decolonial mode to be deciphered, one must use a particular philosophical framework that accounts for multiplicity. Namely, a framework that does not function as a taxonomy but rather as a way into something or a way of looking: an errant mode.

## 2.1 Errantry and Anzaldúa

Errantry is as a form of looking at particular works of philosophy that allows for the hidden decolonial mode Latin American and Caribbean philosophy has adopted. The concept will be fully explained throughout the remainder of this chapter. The philosopher and poet Édouard Glissant elaborated the term and utilized it to describe what he called a *Poetics of Relation*. Édouard Glissant is a poet and philosopher from Martinique who devoted most of his philosophical life understanding the effects of the Conquest in the Caribbean and the Americas. His work follows a deep tradition of poeticism (as opposed to historicism) in the Caribbean as an intellectual approach to understanding the Caribbean identity and imagination. While Glissant utilizes errantry to begin to understand how colonized nations are tied together in relation as he tries to argue, I utilize Glissant's errantry as a lens for looking into the works of Gloria Anzaldúa to understand and demonstrate errantry at work within her particular decolonial approach to philosophy. Furthermore, I will demonstrate how Anzaldúa's embracement of errantry within her own life and work has created a call for a collective consciousness that challenges the existent culture of their respective nations.

There are two aspects of the concept of errantry that are important to my argument. The first has to do with the moment in which the self; or in this particular case the philosopher, finds themselves in the margin or between definitions causing a feeling of unrest. Consequently, feeling like an outsider, questioning their identity and the actual right to belong in a culture. For instance, the understanding of one's particular culture or community as being situated outside of philosophy. An exilic phase summarizes the second aspect. In this phase, the self carries their experience outside of their discipline/culture/country/geography and by avoiding a peripheral state, proceed to conceive of a new mixed identity that pendulates in and outside the

culture/discipline. Because of these two phases of errantry, the self finds ways to return to the culture with a new mode. Since my work is analyzing particular identities that have been “othered,” as that of the philosopher of color, or the queer within Latin American culture, I consider being a particular decolonial mode. It is decolonial because after the self is at unrest and in an exilic state, it returns to disrupt and create a space that holds multiplicity, in other words, her identity and thought, in unity.

## 2.2 Plurality and Multiplicity

I argue that by looking at the works of particular Latin American and Caribbean philosophers that decoloniality as a mode is very much in their mind as a way to allow for existence and to diversify philosophical thought. The philosophical current of this time (late 20<sup>th</sup> century) is concerned not with entering the Western model’s taxonomy but creating a new model which is centered around an idea of plurality and multiplicity. Further support for this claim comes from the fact that Latin American and Caribbean thought is focused on history and identity embodiment and dwells on the creative process of the author as a form of philosophical expression. In his book *Poetics of Relation*, Édouard Glissant, as mentioned before, coins the term of errantry to describe the particular stages of what I call a decolonial mode. The departure from Eurocentric thought is an attempt to begin knitting Latin American and Caribbean epistemology, postcolonial psyche, and pre-Columbian Indigenous and/or African mythology together. Errantry becomes central in my work as well because it implies an inevitable departure from the European model as reproduced by colonialism in Latin American and the Caribbean. Therefore, errantry is not only a way of looking but a way of being.

Errantry in its most basic form, and in relation to epistemology, poses an evaluation of knowledge and cultural practices. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century Latin American and Caribbean

philosophers began to unravel the relationship between the rags of colonialism and collective consciousness through the individual utilizing a decolonial mode informed by errantry. These individuals would often escape their living conditions to begin a new journey into a literal new existence, often trespassing borders, thus presenting their journey as a philosophical one that follows a specific greater philosophical tradition called poeticism within Latin American and Caribbean philosophy.

### 2.3 Errantry as Knowledge Production

Glissant's views on epistemology are shaped by errantry, allowing for it to become a decolonial tool rather than just a poetic statement or a wordplay. At hand then, we have a philosophical problem that emerges from the complexity of what errantry implies and a lack of scholarship on errantry on this concept. In the mid-20th century, Caribbean philosophical discourse, according to Paget Henry in his book *Caliban's Reason*, tended to follow poeticism or historicism as their philosophical frameworks. There was a third group which tended to deviate from both creating bridges between both traditions, which where Édouard Glissant (although most easily placed within poeticism) fits. In short, Paget Henry defines historicism as the intellectual attempt to developing theoretical tools that would lay the groundwork for institutional recovery in colonized nations.<sup>25</sup> Frantz Fanon is a well-known philosopher/sociologist who fits this group, though beginning his work within the poetics because of the priority he assigns to cultural restitution through revolution and/or institutional recovery post colonization. On the other hand, we have the poetics group which exhausts

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<sup>25</sup> Institutional recovery refers to the idea that once colonized nations have control over the ruling institutions, they will recover from colonialism. Revolutions are examples of what institutional recovery implies.

themselves with the recovery of the self (spiritually and identity wise) before dealing with institutional recovery.

## 2.4 Poetics

As we begin to dwell more on Glissant's work, I will quickly review the specific structure that poeticism follows as presented by Paget Henry. When making the distinction between poeticism and historicism, Paget Henry writes "It is important to note that the differences between these two approaches were ones of emphasis and priorities regarding historical action and the creative powers of the human imagination" (Henry 73). A difference on emphasis, however, did not imply a particular detachment from action on the side of the poeticist since Paget Henry, further explaining the tradition, says that

Poetics usually refers to strategies of symbolic and textual production, in particular to the ways in which the concept, word, image, trope, plot, character, and other structural components of a work of art are brought together to create new meanings. But, for many authors, poetics is much more than the strategies by which meanings are produced in texts. It is also an ordering of meanings that is capable of shaping human behavior. In other words, when poetically constructed systems of meaning are internalized, their rules of formation, transformation, and deformation become a grammar of human self-formation and motivation.

(Henry 104)

Action is emphasized in the second half of this citation. Paget Henry writes that the poetics is a creative strategy for shaping human behavior, which implies that as writers, those who express philosophy from the poetics are interested not only in wordplay and creativity but in creating changes in the imaginary as to provoke change. One of the ways Henry sees this at work is

through the grammar that the poetics form. This emphasis is also reflected in the works of Glissant and Anzaldúa. Principally, authors like them propose a new approach to self-formation not only to question their culture, nation, and identity but further to find motivation within other aspects of this identity markers to reshape the logic/hegemony that inform the self-formation.

In Paget Henry's terms, to transform the grammar means to reconfigure the rules of cultural production and identity formation. Indeed, the reference made regarding language here is not unintentional since language is a common point of contention for those who roam within poetics. The relationship between errantry and poeticism stems from the fact that errantry as a methodology, emphasizes the current state of the self. The acknowledgment of the self's state then allows the philosopher to begin to draw conclusions from what could place the self in unrest.<sup>26</sup> Errantry becomes a decolonial tool when, as noted here, it prompts a desire to act based on the new meaning that the self will continue to forge creating. For Glissant and Anzaldúa, mythology becomes a source of internalized racial and national meaning that has been heavily informed by and transformed for political and ideological reasons. The question at hand is then, how errantry allows for the revisiting of origin myths as an attempt to find "a new grammar of self-formation and transformation." Before I fully develop this thought, it is necessary for me to unravel the errantry a little more.

## 2.5 The Path of Errantry

Errantry has not always been a decolonial tool since the term has its origin in precolonial times Europe. In fact, it had its origins in imperial times. In history, we can begin to detect the

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<sup>26</sup> I go further into this in the next few pages.

origin of errantry disguising itself under an ideology of nationalistic expansion and empire building:

At first this thought of errantry, bucking the current of nationalist expansion, was disguised 'within' very personalized adventures—just as the appearance of Western nations had been preceded by the ventures of empire builders. The errantry of troubadour or that of Rimbaud is not yet a thorough, thick (opaque) experience of the world, but it is already errant, passionate desire against a root. The reality of exile during this period is felt as a (temporary) lack that primarily concerns...language (Glissant 15).

In this excerpt, Glissant paints a picture of the troubadour's relationship to errantry. In this picture, the troubadour follows a certain instinct for personalized adventures that bring him not only a sense of fulfillment but also an excitement that comes from a rejection of his roots. Nonetheless, their experience of the world is not yet wholly errant as Glissant would describe it later. Yes, the troubadour goes against a root (which is essential for errantry to take place as a decolonial mode), but he, the troubadour still has an experience of the world that is filtered through an experience of the world that is informed by adventure and hence temporary due to the fact that is guided by a fleeting desire. The troubadour is the epitome of a certain mode of errantry that according to Glissant had a clear objective and motivation to expand the empire. The motive for errantry is established. Errantry does not emerge from any sense of unrest with the self but instead from a clear/transparent motivation to expand. In this early period, the concept of errantry is not fully developed as a practice that allows for the removal of the self from a particular culture in order to question and dare against the root to then return with a new call for collective consciousness. In contrast, one can begin to observe that errantry rather than a



particular experience of the world is simply a desire to go against a particular root and also an individual practice which is guided by an adventurous feeling.

Glissant's use of the concept appears years from the time of the troubadour later into the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a concept which allows for a particular decolonial position to be taken. He revisits the great foundational books. The journey to errantry as a meaningful concept for Caribbean and Latin American thought was an errant journey in and of itself that demanded a rereading of the epics and great founding books of communities. Glissant identified that

The Old Testament, the Iliad, the Odyssey, the Chansons de Geste, the Islandic Sagas, the Aeneid, or the African epics, were all books about exile and often about errantry... These are books about the birth of collective consciousness, but they also introduce the unrest and suspense that allow the individual to discover himself, there, whenever he himself becomes the issue... these books are the beginning of something entirely different from massive, dogmatic, and totalitarian certainty... These are books of errantry, going beyond the pursuits and triumphs of rootedness required by the evolution of history (Glissant 15-16).

A shift in how the troubadour's intentions began to become thicker (opaque or less clear) and less transparent occurred when the epics appear in the picture. The particular experience described in this passage presents a double subjectivity that appears in contrast to each other. The first is a self that finds herself as an issue but at the same time in charge of calling for a collective consciousness. Consequently, the journey was not really about nationalistic expansion but rather about exile and wandering. Exile becomes when one is the issue one departs and wandering because one feels obligated to find the way to return. Exile is a particular individual experience in which the self begins, often times, to navigate a new culture which puts, like in this case, a

double subjectivity in contention. Both exile and wandering possess a particular philosophical nature that later was to inform how Glissant challenged the colonial influence in modern society.

In this passage, Glissant points out two important aspects that clarify what errantry means as I see it manifesting for Latin American and Caribbean philosophers. First, the double subjectivity I have previously mentioned is shown through a particular view of the self as problematic or as an issue in itself. In other words, the individual encounters herself as being an issue to herself both in exile and at home. The double subjectivity emerges from a sense of not feeling away while in exile but still having an exilic experience which in and of itself is being away. And secondly, there is a stage of exile as well that is particularly related to the unrest and suspense that becoming an issue for oneself represents. These two primary stages prompt the journey to errant thought which does not only mean to wander around and roam with no direction whether in thought or physically. Instead, they represent a non-dogmatic form of thought, one that goes particularly against totalitarian roots. That is roots which particularly exist to eliminate everything which does not pertain to it. This often takes the form of myth to form a particular idea of culture

Glissant's reading of these classics serves as a segue into revisiting Anzaldúa's myths. As the epics, which appear as foundational stories that prompt a collective consciousness, myths appeared in Latin America as the foundation to a mixed culture. It was the particular myth of *la Malinche* that according to Octavio Paz gave an inferiority complex to the Mexican self. Errantry is relevant to Latin American and Caribbean identity discourse because the 20th century was the turning point where these regions became overly conscious of their national configuration and thus began to revisit mythology as a point of departure towards elsewhere. In the Latin American

context, errantry also implies a return back into the myth with a new individual consciousness, making a call for a collective one.

Errantry, then, is central to the opening the possibility because it prompts the individual to an exile that can be physical or epistemological. Errantry demands a departure from something towards something else away from the root, namely culture, nation, region. Errantry is an exilic thought. Glissant writes that “exile may erode one’s sense of identity, the thought of errantry—the thought of that which relates—usually reinforces this sense of identity” (Glissant 20). I take this specific citation to propose a new approach to our thoughts of exile. Glissant proposes that the exile which the thought of errantry prompts does not necessarily erode one’s sense of identity, rather it reinforces how identity is formed since one sees oneself outside of the root, meaning outside of one’s culture. To be able to see oneself outside of that which has informed one’s existence is errantry, and it is also a moment of suspension where one can begin to exist particularly both in relation to and outside of one’s culture. Consequently, creating a new identity; a new self emerges. Within exile, the possibility of delinking emerges.

## 2.6 The Question of Identity in Latin American Philosophy

This very attempt of forming an intellectual tradition around the very question of identity was particularly important for Mexico in the 20th century when groups of Mexican intellectuals, artists, poets, and professors were trying to understand *lo mexicano*. In other words, everything regarding Mexico and its identity, including “who are we?” and “who are the intellectual forces who should move us forward?” After World War I and World War II this was not an easily answerable question since Europe’s barbarism was displaying itself in front of the world through war. It is this very crisis, this very moment, that began to shape much of the intellectual period I am moving past to understand where Latin American intellectual life went from there.

My observations had helped me identify the work of Gloria Anzaldúa as a salient philosopher, poet, and educator who begins to draw links between Caribbean and Latin American philosophy when the New World's back was turned to Europe. This drawing and interconnectedness of these two geographical areas are what I begin to characterize as errant, not only because it turns its back on Europe but because we find a particular desire to go against totalitarian roots and more into an approach that holds unity within multiplicity. Her project required a careful revision of the mythopoetic in the region to begin to reevaluate and discard what was negatively affecting identity formation. Anzaldúa's work not only serves as a bridge for Caribbean and Latin American culture but also as an epistemological tool that allows for a return to particular moments in history in which myths (which inform much of identity development) can be reinterpreted, reanalyzed, applied to current times and thus, give them a decolonial turn.

Glissant is not suggesting that errantry is advocating for certain backwardness of the ancient spiritual journey. On the contrary, it is a journey that I interpret as a decolonial tool that brackets the individual to allow for their particular errant journey to be experienced. This is an epistemological as well as the sacred journey. For Anzaldúa that is represented in chapters of the book that although I won't be discussing here, demonstrate that Anzaldúa's reliability on mythology has to do more with a process rather than romantic backwardness into indigenous culture. As mentioned earlier, errantry should remind the reader of canonical works of literature such as Ulysses, the Odyssey, The Aeneid, and the African epics. These works, according to Glissant are all united by three components: they gave origin to a collective consciousness, gave room for the self to discover themselves within their communities, and lastly, they all revolve around the concept of errantry (Glissant 15-16). Throughout Glissant's work, it is essential for

the attentive reader to find the trail he builds for us to facilitate an arrival at the term. He writes, “These are books of errantry, going beyond the pursuits and triumphs of rootedness required by the evolution of history” (Glissant 16). Errantry at its core encompasses a journey which as he describes exists outside of what the evolution of history expects from the self. This is something that should be kept in mind as we move forward developing a close reading of Anzaldúa’s use of mythology as a way into her culture to then delink from it as it exists at that point in time.

Errantry connects Anzaldúa and Glissant's work by pointing out their emphasis on the decolonial option while thinking of identity formation in Latin America and the Caribbean. Although Glissant’s work seems to be limited to the Caribbean (geographically) the concept of errantry in its nature crosses borders particularly to Latin America since they both share similar histories of colonization. As an epistemology, errantry draws from phenomenological accounts as an attempt to piece together a series of errant experiences that have the potential to produce certain kind of knowledge, a type of knowledge that deconstructs the colonial mind and forces itself into a decolonial imagination. In the next pages, I attempt to demonstrate how errantry enables us to understand Anzaldúa's work and how her work extends our understanding of errantry in relation to coloniality. Both *Poetics of Relation* and *Borderlands/la frontera* are canonical for our understanding of what I mean by the effects of the Conquest and further to the understanding of coloniality in the Americas. These two works will begin to reveal, in our analysis, their emphasis on the decolonial option to identity formation. In providing us with such a choice, we will understand the central role that errantry plays or must play in any decolonial discourse.

*“Movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan”*  
*Esos movimientos de rebeldía que tenemos en la sangre*  
*nosotros los mexicanos surgen como ríos desbocados en*  
*mis venas. Y como mi raza que cada en cuando deja caer*  
*esa esclavitud de obedecer, de callarse y aceptar, en mi está*  
*la rebeldía encimita de mi carne. Debajo de mi humillada*  
*mirada está una cara insolente lista para explotar. Me*  
*costó muy caro mi rebeldía—acalambrada con desvelos y*  
*dudas, sintiéndome inútil, estúpida, e impotente.*

*Me entra una rabia cuando alguien—sea mi mamá, la*  
*Iglesia, la cultura de los anglos—me dice haz esto, haz eso*  
*sin considerar mis deseos.*

*Repele. Hable pa’ ‘tras. Fui muy hocicona. Era indiferente*  
*a muchos valores de mi culture. No me dejé de los hom-*  
*bres. No fui buena ni obediente.*

*Pero he crecido. Ya no sólo pasó toda mi vida botando las*  
*costumbres y los valores de mi cultura que me traicionan.*  
*También recojo las costumbres que por el tiempo se han*  
*probado y las costumbres de respeto a las mujeres. But*  
*despite my growing tolerance, for this Chicana la guerra de*  
*independencia is a constant.*

**Opening poem in “Movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan” a chapter from  
 Borderlands/La frontera by Gloria Anzaldúa**

### 3. Chapter Three: Doing Decolonial Philosophy: Gloria Anzaldúa and Errantry

Errantry is a hallmark of Gloria Anzaldúa's decolonial work. In chapter one, I introduced the popular account of how *la Malinche* enters Mexican culture. In my analysis, I concluded that her figure, because of its symbolism, was reduced to a colonial cultural artifact.<sup>27</sup> This chapter then is a close reading of *la Malinche* beginning with her representation for the popular masses through muralism in Mexico and culminating with how Gloria Anzaldúa's (errant) re-reading of the myth.<sup>28</sup> For Anzaldúa time does not begin with *la Malinche*, for Anzaldúa *la new mestiza* does not need to be born out of *la Malinche* even though she is the mother. Through creative writing, autobiographical tints and philosophy, Anzaldúa adopts errantry (formally) to move away from her roots while demonstrating that doing such does not erode identity. In this chapter, I seek to explore Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/la frontera* as a philosophical body of work that employs poetry and autobiographical narratives, this ambiguous genre of writing embodies the movement and ambiguity of errantry.

Anzaldúa adopts an errant mode to begin to forge *la conciencia de la mestiza* as she calls her philosophical project, a conscience that deviates in some ways from that which José Vasconcelos tried to forge in post-revolutionary Mexico employing muralism and named *la raza cósmica* (Anzaldúa 99). To highlight Anzaldúa's intervention, I employ the use of two popular murals that were painted in between 1926 and 1932 by José Clemente Orozco and Antonio Ruíz

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<sup>27</sup> This conclusion does not aim to reduce what she represents in a broader sense but it is more of a highlight of how, when I read cultural artefacts through the lens of coloniality and errantry, I got a sense that the way *la Malinche* has existed in Mexican culture has been primarily informed by colonialism until Gloria Anzaldúa offered a more radical reading of the myth. In this sense, I am arguing that the myth in and of itself is not colonial inherently but the way in which it exists in the national consciousness of Mexico is.

<sup>28</sup> In 1925, José Vasconcelos was the Minister of Education in Mexico. His ambitious first initiative was to have everyday Mexicans read what is considered to be "The Canon." However, in the post-revolutionary nation of Mexico, the task seemed impossible since approximately 70% of the population was illiterate. His second attempt to educate the masses and promote unity in the country was through the painting of murals in public plazas and school institutions in Mexico that represented major symbols, mythology, and culture of the country.

that represent the way *la Malinche* existed in the national consciousness at the time. It is her tampering with this mythology from an aperture that drove me to frame her philosophical approach as errant and thus, by delinking from normative and disciplinary regulations of the latter, decolonial.

### 3.1 From Where *la Malinche* Needs to be Rescued

What underlies much of *la Malinche*'s myth as presented in Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La frontera*, is an attempt to develop a new conception of culture and conscience in the Latin American context. *La Malinche*'s indigeneity and her ability to communicate in Nahuatl, Spanish, and the Chontal Mayan language make for her story easily turn into a symbol of the perfect translator or the indigenous figure of the XVI century.<sup>29</sup> It is also her turbulent relationship with Hernán Cortés, which resulted in what according to the narrative is the birth of the first mestizo child in the Americas that allow for further stratification of her. The latter makes *la Malinche* the foundation over which the new American identity was constructed.

The fact of the matter, nonetheless, is that her myth never rested while remaining dependent on a constant narrative. What never ceased to exist was a colonial project which seemed to fit her narrative within the construction of a colonial culture that was put in motion since the Conquest. Although Gloria Anzaldúa never formally addresses Octavio Paz in *Borderlands/la frontera*, a Mexican poet and essayist who is considered one of the most influential thinkers regarding how *la Malinche* exists in Mexican culture, she subverts the narrative that he further popularized following the legacy of murals in Mexico. *La Malinche*' sole existence as a myth/historical narrative is responsible for what centuries later Octavio Paz

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<sup>29</sup> This information is hard to track down from one specific source but has been made available to me in class discussions, conversations and other oral sources.



calls the Mexican inferiority complex. “Somos hijos de la chingada,” he writes, a statement that according to him, hides in it the anxiety that Mexicans had about their own cultural and existential worth under the eyes of Europe. This inferiority complex defined what Mexico’s relationship to Europe was and more broadly what Latin America and the Caribbean were to become: peripheral independent nations. Paz also highlights that parallel to this inferiority complex, *la Chingada* is the matrix of a new race (the mestizo). Despite this distinction, he perpetuates a dynamic that has accompanied *la Malinche* the entire way, that is a notion that she is a traitor, an equal responsible party of the Conquest, the mother who has abandoned her children. But it is this ambiguity, this negotiation of coloniality and self-affirmation that underlies her myth, a myth that defines identity and consciousness development in Mexican and Chicano/a thought.

### 3.2 Muralism/A Glimpse at the Old Culture

Considering Octavio Paz (1950) and Gloria Anzaldúa (1980) takes on *la Malinche* the era of murals in Mexico was the cultural movement that made the nation return to the myth. I believe it is important first to understand the way she was depicted in the late 1920’s and early 1930’s to understand the cultural landscape in which she existed. The first painting I will be looking at is titled *Cortés & Malinche* (1926-7) (*see fig. 1*) by José Clemente Orozco. I take that this first mural establishes how *la Malinche* existed in the Mexican imaginary. The first image represents the colonial elements of the myth. The second painting by Antonio Ruíz titled *El sueño de la Malinche* (1932) (*see fig. 2*) appears in this chapter as a reminder that despite her negative connotation, *la Malinche* is the foundation of the nation. As a result of its popularity, this second painting suggests to me that Gloria Anzaldúa is very conscious of the role that *la Malinche* plays in Mexican culture. Despite this function, she does not hesitate to conceive of a philosophical

body of work that could potentially be disastrous for her culture. The two paintings represent the consciousness that Anzaldúa confronts from the colonial difference.<sup>30</sup>

The *Cortés & Malinche* (see fig.1) painting depicts a figure of Hernán Cortés, depicted as a statue and a brown bodied *Malinche*. Despite its apparent clarity, various elements rob this mural of stability. The way that both bodies are juxtaposed suggests that *Malinche* and Cortés are linked. Their bodies are placed at the same height as they both look to a horizon. In their positionality, Cortés and *la Malinche* appear in a mutual space as if they existed in the same ground; his left hand suggests force despite their equal grounding. Furthermore, there is a traditional representation of fertility that in our known history of *la Malinche* and her ambiguous relationship with Hernán Cortés. In their distant gaze, they carry time. For her, it is what she is about to become while Cortés looks at what he has done. The background has an apocalyptic undertone; it shows a reddening sky and a ground for solace. The hand gestures here, particularly of *la Malinche*, shows a decaying body being reached by her while Cortés is depicted in an ambiguous pose.

It is uncertain whether he is protecting her from something or he is constraining her from movement. What is clear nonetheless is the fact Cortés restrains her from touching the body of indigenous men that lies on the ground. In this particular depiction of *la Malinche*, she is circulating in the Mexican national context as she is subject of a series of murals that were painted in critical *plazas* and institutions of Mexico to represent cultural practices, artifacts, and memory. What is essential about this painting is the emphasis it makes on the body of *la Malinche*. What is being emphasized is a double implication. First, her indigeneity for the way in

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<sup>30</sup> Refer to the first chapter.

which her body is depicted (resembling various colonial paintings of indigenous people) and secondly, the messages that her body conveys. The latter using her physical relationship with the native man who lays on the ground. He lays at Malinche's feet, possibly dead. He encapsulates her past actions and assistance of Cortés as a translator. He represents her past. On the other hand, her look describes what she is to become—the body upon where the Mexican nation for better or for worse gets built upon (in the national mythology).

*El sueño de la Malinche* (see fig. 2) is particularly important to begin to understand how her work becomes a foundation used to build a national narrative. When we look at this image, we can detect how vital but also deviant Anzaldúa's errant mode is. In this painting, *la Malinche* lays in bed in a dream as the title of the painting suggests, and the valley of Mexico is juxtaposed on the thin sheets that covers her body. This dream is threatened by a crack in the wall next to her; the crack, in shape, resembles lightning. Lightning is loud and clear bringing light and disruption. It can also interrupt *la Malinche's* dream. Following this logic, one can conclude that the act of dreaming, in this painting is feeble. The dream puts in danger the entirety of the Mexican nation since a movement could make the concept of the homeland tremble. Therefore, to upset *la Malinche* is to make the Mexican national project unstable.

However, it is a post-conquest Mexican representation that we have here. At the top of the hill, there is a colonial structure of a church that is perhaps the town's church of a Catholic village. These structures are all representing a colonial period since Aztec pre-conquest sacred buildings did not include a ceiling in their construction. In both images, there is a shared responsibility that is *la Malinche* shares for her involvement in the massacre of the indigenous population that is not explicitly represented, but that is symbolically implied by a shared positionality and equal grounding that Ruíz gives to them both. These two paintings together

complete the implication with her representation as equal to Cortés in the first image and Mexico being constructed on her body in the second image. In this sense, the images when put together equate Cortés colonizing acts and *la Malinche*'s conception of the first Mexican person. These two images come to be part of what I consider to be a foundational colonial myth to Mexican culture and national identity. It is this importance that makes Anzaldúa's work more radical and at the same time errant.<sup>31</sup>

I interpret *Borderlands/la frontera* as a decision that Gloria Anzaldúa makes to engage in the myth of *la Malinche* as a way into the colonial aspects of Mexican culture. This decision that Anzaldúa makes implies a disruption into a particular narrative of her own culture. With the underlying understanding that for Anzaldúa, the ethos of her nation is a colonial construction which perpetuates colonial logic (coloniality), then we can understand that what Anzaldúa sees is coloniality at work in *la Malinche*'s narrative. She seeks to alter this narrative and transgress cultural and national values. The alternate version of such tale which she offers tries to do both, disrupt a story and construct another. The latter being a decolonial capturing of the complexity of the character of *la Malinche*, rescuing her from the hands of Cortés and hence the colonial project that objectifies her. Anzaldúa in this sense chooses to confront controlling mechanisms. This confrontation is the beginning of Anzaldúa's errantry, how she transgresses the disciplinary

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<sup>31</sup> In this specific case, as clarified in chapter two, errantry comes to appear in this sentence as her acceptance of letting the Shadow-beast scape her consciousness and inform her intellectual acts. Gloria Anzaldúa knows that her attempt to upset *la Malinche* carries with it the weight of destroying a culture. That is why in chapter VII of her book *Borderlands* she attempts to offer a new *mestiza* consciousness. This consciousness also revisits a very problematic text in Mexican history, José Vasconcelos' *La raza cósmica*. In this sense, Anzaldúa stresses her commitment to errantry by being able to take it all in as she rejects all which is oppressive; that which her Shadow-beast attempts to disregard from her culture.

and normative regulations of philosophy. Her rejection of culture is her existential philosophical project.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Although I am utilizing culture here really broadly, this is simply equating the ways in which Anzaldúa employs the term. In the opening poem I utilized at the beginning of this chapter from *Borderlands*, for instance, Anzaldúa writes *culturas que traicionan* referring in the broadest sense to the aspects of culture that impose themselves through tradition transgressing women's autonomy. The verb *traicionan* translates to betray, so the willingly act of turning one's back to the other.



*(fig. 1) Cortés y Malinche, José Clemente Orozco, 1926 National Preparatory School Murals*





**(fig. 2) *El sueño de la Malinche*, Antonio Ruíz, 1932 Galería de Arte Mexicano**

*Malinche* served as translator, negotiator and cultural mediator to Cortés from 1519 to 1526. This image evokes female earth deities known to the Aztecs, and it sustains the metaphor of the Mexican nation having been built upon the “ground” laid by *Malinche*’s actions. The lightning above *Malinche*’s head suggests her dream (as in the painting’s title) may not be pacific. Should she toss or turn or even awaken the consequences for the Mexican community resting upon her blanket would be disastrous.

### 3.3 Culture and the Self at Unrest

It is an understanding of culture as a colonial construction that informs Gloria Anzaldúa's necessity to adopt an errant mode. As mentioned in chapter two, the errant is at unrest with herself, an internal exile that shapes her experiences and thus her being. Like Mignolo, Anzaldúa sees a precise construction of culture as a colonial one. The following passage from Mignolo's essay "Philosophy and the Colonial Difference" highlights what I perceive throughout Anzaldúa's work to be her suspicion about culture. In the essay Mignolo writes:

The very concept of 'culture' is a colonial construction and that, indeed, "cultural difference" is the effect and the work of coloniality of power. "Cultural difference" is basically a semantic question, while 'colonial difference' underlines power relations, the coloniality of power, in the very making of cultural differences. The colonial difference is the underlying logic, and power relations holding together cultural differences have been articulated by the coloniality of power, from early Christian global designs to the current global coloniality driven by the metaphysics market. Intellectual decolonization, and in the case at hand the decolonization of philosophy, could help undo the colonial difference and imagine possible futures beyond the alternative offered by global coloniality and the current production of the colonial difference (Mignolo 85).

As explained in chapter one, the colonial difference is a mental space of confrontation where coloniality informs the construction of cultural differences. The colonial difference is the space where the subaltern perspective confronts hegemonic ones. This gap between subaltern and hegemonic confrontation conceives cultural differences. In that sense then, cultural difference appears as a marker that holds meaning and connotations informed by the logic of colonialism.



In this passage, Mignolo essentially argues that cultural difference is a matter of sense and logic while the colonial difference highlights or brings attention to the power dynamics that exist in the very making of cultural difference. This accentuation on the difference for Mignolo is not only stating the difference in and of itself, but it carries with it a specific logic that shapes and creates a culture of the colony. The matrix of the coloniality of power produces a culture that upholds its values and its practices to make the particular fit into a holistic vision. Gloria Anzaldúa sees culture as a threat to existence as well; in her case, she adds a layer of complication that I seek to explore further.

For Anzaldúa, Latin Americans have identified with the culture that oppresses her people, and thus she is addressing a culture that is her own but needs to cut the bad weeds that have grown in the land created by the coloniality of power. It is this underlying notion of culture which defines Gloria Anzaldúa's delinking and adoption of an errant mode. *Borderlands/la frontera* is a work characterized by movement, determined by the colonial difference since it exists in this constant battle between the subaltern perspective and hegemony, in other words, the self (Anzaldúa) against the hegemony (culture). I opened up this chapter with a poem by Anzaldúa which begins to highlight what delinking means for her. In this poem, she talks about an inner rebel that exists within her body which pushes her to renounce passive attitudes such as obeying, being silent and accepting without questioning. This inner rebel provokes a visceral reaction from her. Literal anger is expressed "*me entra una rabia,*" she writes. Delinking, however, is more than anger; it is a guided desire to reject customs, cultures, and values that betray the self. Delinking also implies "*[recoger] las costumbres que por el tiempo se han probado y las costumbres de respeto a las mujeres*" (Anzaldúa 37). We have been introduced to this idea of delinking in chapter one as I discussed Aníbal Quijano and Walter D. Mignolo in

conversation with each other but the basic structure is that delinking allows for the bracketing (or suspension) of structures of power to reformulate a form of thinking that is *propio*. For Anzaldúa, this thinking begins by rejecting her culture to begin to understand her sexuality as a woman. Her delinking is both physical and epistemic.

### 3.4 Physical and Epistemic Delinking

Anzaldúa's work when framed as an errant mode demonstrates the physical and epistemic delinking that she alongside her account of *la Malinche* undergo. This removal is first defined by her leaving home and second by a confrontation with her Chicano/a culture. *Borderlands* belongs to an ambiguous genre of writing, and although there is a literary tint, this has to do with the importance Anzaldúa sees in creative writing rather than the genre of her book. In that sense, the genre of *Borderlands* remains opaque to us. Setting this conversation aside, what is essential is to understand how an errant journey of delinking and relinking into her culture underlies this work. The line of questioning that Anzaldúa follows begins with a physical delinking. At a young age, she decided to leave home as a rebellious act and the beginning of her errant journey. This departure is as a form of exile that allowed her to perceive her culture from the outside. She served as an interlocutor between her culture and those cultures that she experienced outside. As mentioned in the opening poem for "*Movimientos de rebeldía y culturas que traicionan*" she states that during this exile she grew up to understand that she can *recoger*<sup>33</sup> the customs that have proven themselves through time to be worth keeping. The myth of *la Malinche* mediates the epistemic delinking that Anzaldúa performs. The revisiting of *la*

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<sup>33</sup> To pick up

*Malinche* is essential in the making of *Borderlands*. Anzaldúa's approach redeems *la Malinche* and suspends the conventional narrative of her as an equally culpable party during the Conquest.

The way Anzaldúa upsets *la Malinche* is an interruption (a delinking) of the traditional approach of the myth. And to upset *la Malinche* is to upset the order of Mexican society. In this destabilizing confrontation with the narrative is where Anzaldúa doesn't mind upsetting a societal order that is founded upon the reduction of indigenous existence (such as a *la Malinche*) and the epistemic violence that is implied. In chapter two of her book "Movimientos de Rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan" Anzaldúa argues that culture is created by a dominant class to preserve itself (the culture). Meaning that culture (through tradition) exists to protect culture. According to Anzaldúa both culture and religion exist in our consciousness to protect the self by grouping the divine and the undivine. The divine connotes "sexuality, and the unconscious" while the former is "the god in us" (Anzaldúa 17). The way in which culture operates in the case of women is that it adds a layer of abstraction (see chapter one) to the self to make it strange to the practicing community. In other words, the sexuality of women and their natural biological cycles are abstracted by the culture as a way to emphasize the need to halt them or control them. The logic of colonialism lurks in this picture as it does in many other cultural manifestations of femininity. It is this dynamic that Anzaldúa et al. are worried about when they refer to culture as a colonial construction. If we managed to grapple with the role of sexuality in her suspicion of culture then, we can begin to deal with cutting some of the weeds in the myth of *la Malinche* to construct a path that allows us to delink from coloniality.

### 3.5 The Intersticio to Confront the Culture

The culture targets the woman explicitly because of their different existence and more importantly being in touch with both the divine and the undivine. The culture fears the female for

existing in the borderland. Anzaldúa writes that they bleed but don't die, they create entities of flesh in their bodies and they are in tune with nature's cycles. The internal fear societies have developed against the female body then give rise to the need for creating mechanisms of control that can halt the existential fear of woman. Europe carried this fear. Culture, according to Anzaldúa is the creation of rigid control of the female by the male. The female embodiment then is a borderland. A space in between which Anzaldúa defines as the *intersticio*. A place that through the culture creates responsibility for the self but that at the same time strips the self from autonomy (the ability to respond). Therefore, the ability to be responsible for the culture and the people who practice it. It is a place of intervention that can empower or disempower.

We have discussed in a previous chapter (see chapter two) that particular unrest with the self that precedes errantry. This unrest leads to distance and eventually exile. Anzaldúa describes this unrest as having an animalistic shape that exists within a dark space; she calls it the Shadow-beast. For Anzaldúa the Shadow-beast lives at an unconscious level since it prompts the self to behave in rebellious ways when it encounters authority or positions in which it is at the receiving end of power relations. Anzaldúa writes that the Shadow-beast exists as a force that refuses to take orders from her conscious will (Anzaldúa *3rd ed.* 38). In this sense, aspects of herself that she has consciously chosen to follow in her life appear to her as if they were constraints to existence. The ancient mythology of Coatlicue informs her understanding of the effects of the Shadow-beast upon her existence. The Shadow-beast's resemblance to the Aztec deity begins with a physical one. Gloria Anzaldúa writes that it has lidless eyes, cold, clammy moist hands and produces a hissing sound which should remind us of a serpent, a central animal in Aztec cosmologies. This unrest, the battle between the conscious and the unconscious that is constructed in the spaces between a Chicana existence and an Aztec cosmology is the *intersticio*,

that space in between where one either chooses to threaten one's sovereignty or to be errant; to depart.

### 3.6 The Embodiment of the Colonial Difference: The Shadow-beast

It is from this premise and inner conflict that culture creates that prompts Anzaldúa's errantry. She can no longer exist within a culture that upsets existence for the sake of tradition. When placed in the *intersticio*, she believes that one has three options, one which includes errantry as she experiences it and as defined by Édouard Glissant (see chapter two). Anzaldúa utilizes a phenomenological account to demonstrate the validity of her argument. Anzaldúa conceptualizes the resistant embodiment of the culture as the Shadow-beast. The structure of the shadow-beast is simple; it is the self that is constrained by the culture for the fear to be found out by the culture and be abandoned by it. The culture, *la raza*, is the mother, hence the fear to be abandoned by it. There are four primary attitudes towards the shadow-beast according to Gloria Anzaldúa. (1) To hide it, (2) to be conscious of it, (3) to waken it up and (4) to confront it. Only those who face it encounter the actual realization of what the Shadow-beast is, a delicate creature that is othered by the culture of an apparent lust. Those who hide it undergo the acutest existential crisis. They fear to be perceived as damaged by the Other (*la raza*). They push the unacceptable to the shadows; their fear is not only to exist as the deviant self of the culture but to be found out by them and then perceived as damaged. Anzaldúa believes that those who confront it uncover the lie. They realize that the Shadow-beast is not what makes the mother (*la raza*) abandon you but that by the mere fact that there is a Shadow-beast in the first place you have been abandoned already (for being deviant).

### 3.7 Making of a Symbol

*La Malinche* serves as a clear image of what Anzaldúa means by abandonment in her writing. In philosophy, often we hear of the word abandonment in relationship to a god or God as some religions consider proper. In other words, the absence of a sacred figure, the self, is completely responsible for their being. Within the same context, abandonment also implies a degree that we (as people) are alone in the world and thus are responsible for our actions, suffering, and so on. This is foundational and a basic premise for existentialism as much as in Europe as in Latin America. For Anzaldúa *la Malinche* encapsulates the very questions that inform such thought. The roles, however, are flipped by the indisputable fact that from earlier conceptions of her story, *la Malinche* is a mother. And although her previous existence (as Coatlicue) she was a deity, it is not her who has abandoned *la gente Chicana* but they have abandoned her. However, the colonial story of *la Malinche* shows an image of a woman who although she represents the foundation of a nation (*see fig.2*) she has abandoned her people to the Conquest. For Anzaldúa that is what is wrong with how she appears in the Mexican and Chicano consciousness. Anzaldúa's errant mode is an attempt to mediate the tension between the colonial and the pre-conquest notion of the mother.

In my interpretation of how the three mothers of Mexico (*Guadalupe, la Malinche y la Llorona*) appear in Gloria Anzaldúa's work, they are all mediators that have instrumental value in the way in which the coloniality of power used them. Symbolically, the three of them are ambiguous and transpire a sense of ambivalence and insecurity when we refer to them (Anzaldúa 52). Therefore, the subversion of their identity plays a vital role in informing Mexican culture in the future because they are not supposed to be simple figures as they now are. I suspect that Anzaldúa's understanding of the three mothers as mediators is what leads her to conceive of

certain cultural aspects of Chicanos as being colonial. In chapter one, we investigated how one of the consequences of coloniality is its capacity of suppressing ambiguity by repressing it to a symbolic or abstract level. The way the myth of *la Malinche* works, for instance, is that she became the symbol of what ashamed Mexicans and Chicano—the repressed Indian side (Anzaldúa 53).

The way in which the Indian side is repressed has to do with the amount of blame that the culture has assigned to *la Malinche*. Anzaldúa subverts this narrative when she writes that *la Malinche* is “an image/that comes and goes clearing and darkening/ the fear that she’s the dreamwork inside someone else’s skull” (Anzaldúa 65). The nature of how *la Malinche* appears as a symbol/image is emphasized when Anzaldúa expresses that she exists in someone else’s skull. In this instance, the skull is an essential marker of colonization in the Americas as skulls were used to justify conquest. Moreover, the emphasis is made in her story existing in someone else’s skull making a reference to a different cosmology, a different way of seeing things in other words, from the colonial matrix of power. As an errant writer and someone who genuinely cares about deconstructing culture, Anzaldúa proceeds to reinterpret culpability in the myth.

She gives the following context:

The conquered tribes hated the Aztecs because of the rape of their women, and the heavy taxes levied on them. Tlaxcalans were the Aztecs’ bitter enemies, and it was they who helped the Spanish defeat the Aztec rulers, who were by this time so unpopular with their own common people that they could not even mobilize the populace to defend the city. Thus, the Aztec nation fell not because *Malinali* (*la Chingada*) interpreted for and slept with Cortés, but because the ruling elite

had subverted the solidarity between men and women noble and commoner (Anzaldua 3rd ed. 56).

Anchoring herself in ancient mythology from Mesoamerica, Anzaldúa wanders in the historical context in which *la Malinche* existed. In this passage, Anzaldúa outlines an imperial relationship between the Aztecs and the Tlaxcalans who were bitter enemies of the Aztecs. Their ruling over the Tlaxcalans which resulted in unequal relationships between men and women and noble and commoner is what in reality forces their enemies to assist the Conquest. Anzaldúa intends to transform the myth by broadening culpability (Alcocer 116). In this sense, she can present us with the myth of *la Malinche* not only as a symbol that was used as a scapegoat but more importantly as an archetype. She is the construction that was imagined in someone else's skull. To rescue her, Anzaldúa relies on two ancient mythologies (that of Coatlicue and that of the Tlaxcalans) to salvage the image of an essential figure of Mexican national consciousness.

### 3.8 A Commitment to Decolonization

To sum up, Anzaldúa's errantry as conceptualized by Édouard Glissant is a hallmark of decolonization. *Borderlands/la frontera* is the result of what it looks like to be errant within your own culture. Anzaldúa takes onto the task of understanding how she feels at unrest with herself (the Shadow-beats is a boundary of this unrest) to then proceed to reformulate her culture in a way that she can fit in it. In her journey, she begins to differentiate between *lo heredado*, *lo adquirido*, *lo impuesto* (Anzaldúa, 104-105). For Anzaldúa errantry is about not necessarily being able to distinguish the three but to be able to grapple with them in such a way so that one can begin to sift out that which forces our existence upon us. A necessary attitude that one must take is that of self-determination; a determination to break from the culture, to delink from oppressive traditions. Therefore, if the myths, symbols, and archetypes of the culture are



identifiable as belonging to a Eurocentric notion of totality, then one must begin to reinterpret and appropriate history and philosophy just to mention some to start to lay a new foundation. In “*El camino de la Mestiza/The Mestiza Way*” Gloria Anzaldúa writes:

She strengthens her tolerance (and intolerance) for ambiguity. She is willing to share, to make herself vulnerable to foreign ways of seeing and thinking. She surrenders all notions of safety, of the familiar. Deconstruct, construct. She becomes a *nahual*, able to transform herself into a tree, a coyote, into another person. She learns to transform the small “I” into the total Self. *Se hace moldeadora de su alma. Según la concepción que tiene de sí misma, así será* (Anzaldúa 104-105).

It is in this way that *la mestiza* forges a new path towards freedom. Her commitment to decolonization is born out of her willingness to sacrifice herself by becoming vulnerable to uncover and embrace ambiguity. She must not fit. She must remain opaque.

The word *abyssal*...has pessimistic overtones suggesting an unbridgeable gap...describing a separation of the social reality of the West from that of the global South in which whatever lies on “the other side of the line” is deemed nonexistent and radically excluded.

*The Decolonial Abyss: Mysticism and Cosmopolitics from the Ruins*, An Yountae

### **Conclusion: The Allure of Philosophy**

What does it mean to philosophize? This is the question that underlies the motivation behind this entire thesis. By arguing that we can identify errantry, a hallmark of decoloniality, in Gloria Anzaldúa’s appropriation and restitution of *la Malinche*, I am engaging in the work of metaphilosophy. In other words, I am parsing out the aspects of her work that are philosophically compelling to question back Philosophy as to why her work doesn’t enter this category. Gloria Anzaldúa’s philosophical engagement with *la Malinche* happens through her use of errantry as a practice and as a theoretical framework. By noting and observing this formal decision, I see my work as an attempt to develop a philosophically decolonial methodology for the interpretation and analysis of cultural artifacts; Anzaldúa’s work is a blueprint of what is it like to engage with this methodology.

As discussed throughout this thesis, coloniality and errantry are two concepts that would be foundational to this kind of decolonial methodology. Coloniality points out the logic of colonialism (as it survived through time becoming the darker side of modernity), while errantry is the philosophical attempt to recover the self from the damage inflicted by colonialism and modernity (through art and cultural restitution). In understanding these two concepts, we can begin to think of this methodology for the analysis of cultural artifacts as an attempt to understand how some aspects of national culture become vehicles for hegemony and thus for the suppression of subaltern knowledge. Errantry, then, is the step further that needs to be taken for the restitution of national culture. It also offers the theoretical framework for moving away from

single roots as means to formulate roots that account for multiplicity (subaltern perspectives and hegemony).

The lack of translation throughout my thesis was not an issue of time but rather a stylistic choice that aims to articulate my experience as the researcher. Most of the works I found were written bilingually or in Spanish. Some others were completely in English as they were translated by others or by the author themselves. Throughout my research, then, I operated in both languages, often simultaneously. *Borderlands/la frontera* is the text that motivated me to make this choice since it is a text that is fully written bilingually (providing only translation for essential parts—as I did). I felt as if Gloria Anzaldúa's stylistic choice was not only a creative tool but a formal decision to adopt errantry. Errantry, again, at its most basic form, is the desire to go against a single root (in Anzaldúa's case against normative philosophy). In this context, I am utilizing errantry to speak of movement and a removal/breaking away from formal academic writing to question the very nature of doing philosophical writing. In this way, like Anzaldúa, my theory becomes a formal decision I am making throughout my writing.

The epigraph which I use to frame this conclusion by An Yountae suggests that coloniality has maintained an open abyss between Europe and the global South. Philosophy itself enables the abyss through disciplinary regulations and normative conceptions of itself. Philosophy thinks of itself as both regional and universal at the same time. Regional because it is the name given to the ways thinking through problems in Greek society and universal because they assume it to articulate general human truths. The abyss represents the relationship philosophy has with Latin America, the Caribbean, and the global South. We are the bodies about which philosophy tries to theorize while we (the rest of non-European thinkers) can't take part on that. This distance takes the form of neglecting the physical and intellectual endeavors of

the global South self since its preoccupation with local history and regional identity makes our thinking divergent for its lack of universality. The radical exclusion Yountae talks about continues to be perpetuated by imaginary constructions, such as culture, that have its origin in colonial times, typically reconfigured by those in power. It creates a discourse that disregards “the other side of the line.”

There is a morbid but clear image in my head of how one closes an “unbridgeable gap.” Step number one, you stand near the border of it, right where vertigo begins. Step number two, you stare at the abyss. Step number three, face it, direct your gaze at it and *arrojate*. When I first read *Borderlands/la frontera*, I had this feeling lurking that Anzaldúa followed these steps in the making of her book. To throw oneself into the abyss means to give up what is known/transparent for that which is unknown and unclear (opaque). It is to give up some aspects of one’s culture for self-recovery when nobody has outlined what self-recovery is supposed to mean. Her critique of the colonial matrix of power through her analysis of culture was a necessary transgression for the restitution of subaltern knowledge not only in Mexico but Latin America. She gave us the right to remain open and opaque. Open to the possibility of entering the unknown and opaque by rejecting Eurocentric taxonomy.

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