

 EL MUNDO ZURDO 8 

SELECTED WORKS FROM THE 2019 MEETING OF THE SOCIETY
FOR THE STUDY OF GLORIA ANZALDÚA

EDITED BY
ADRIANNA M. SANTOS, RITA E. URQUIJO-RUIZ,
AND NORMA E. CANTÚ

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LA MEXICANA EN LA CHICANA

SOURCES OF ANZALDÚA'S MEXICAN PHILOSOPHY¹

ALEXANDER V. STEHN AND MARIANA ALESSANDRI

Gloria Anzaldúa once envisioned participating in a plenary panel to be titled “La Mexicana en la Chicana” (Box 122, Folder 11)² at the 1991 annual meeting of the National Association of Chicano Studies (NACS), the first to be hosted in Mexico, in Hermosillo, Sonora. The conference theme was Los Dos Méxicos, which resonated with Anzaldúa’s dedication of *Borderlands / La Frontera*: “a todos mexicanos on both sides of the border” (front matter). Anzaldúa did not end up

1 A different version of this essay was published in the *Inter-American Journal of Philosophy* (Stehn and Alessandri, “La Mexicana”). We are grateful to the journal’s editors for granting reprint permission in order to reach a wider audience of Anzaldúa scholars.

2 Handwritten note in the Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin. Copyright © Gloria E. Anzaldúa. Reprinted by permission of The Gloria E. Anzaldúa Trust. All rights reserved. Parenthetical references to box and folder numbers throughout this essay refer to materials available in this archive. A guide to its contents is available on the web at <https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/taro/utlac/00189/lac-00189.html>. Parenthetical references to book box numbers refer to the archival location of one of the more than 5,000 books from Anzaldúa’s personal library, maintained in the same archive.

participating in this conference, but she attended many other NACCS³ conferences and was honored with the association's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005, a year after her death. Unfortunately, Anzaldúa's contributions to philosophy are far less recognized, but this is slowly changing.⁴ The fact that Anzaldúa scholars have focused on her relevance for understanding a variety of US-American identities⁵—Chicanx, women of color, queer, etc.—has obscured the fact that Anzaldúa also drew from and contributed to Mexican philosophy, especially *la filosofía de lo mexicano* that flourished in mid-twentieth-century Mexico.⁶

Our essay examines Anzaldúa's critical appropriation of Mexican philosophical sources, especially in the writing of *Borderlands / La Frontera*. We demonstrate how Anzaldúa contributed to Mexican and Chicana philosophy by developing a transnational philosophy of Mexicanness, effectively participating in what has been recently characterized as the “multi-generational project to pursue philosophy *from* and *about* Mexican circumstances” (Vargas). More specifically, we recover “La Mexicana en la Chicana” by paying careful attention to Anzaldúa's Mexican sources, both those she explicitly cites and those we discovered while conducting archival research using the Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers in the Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas (UT) at Austin. In the three sections that follow, we: 1) pragmatically define the terms *Mexican* and *philosophy* in conversation with Anzaldúa's work, 2) examine the Mexican philosophical sources that Anzaldúa cites in *Borderlands / La Frontera*, and 3) present the other major Mexican philosophical influences on Anzaldúa that we found in the archive. The eight Mexican philosophical sources we discuss here are: José Vasconcelos (1882–1959), Miguel León-Portilla (1926–2019), Juana Armanda Alegría (1938–), Octavio Paz (1914–1998), Samuel Ramos (1897–1959), Rosario Castellanos (1925–1974), Sor Juana Inés de La Cruz (1648–1695), and Jorge Carrión (1913–2005).

3 In 1995, the membership of the National Association of Chicano Studies (NACS) voted to recognize the critical contribution and role of Chicanas in the association by renaming themselves the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS).

4 Examples of recent works that treat Anzaldúa as a philosopher include: Martínez 2014; Pitts 2016; Paccacerqua 2016; Ortega 2016; Newton 2017; Tirres 2019; Pitts et al. 2019; Alessandri 2019; Alessandri 2020; Alessandri and Stehn 2020; Stehn 2020.

5 We use “U.S. American” rather than “American” to refer to people in the United States of America to avoid the narrow provincialism summarized by Edgar Sheffield Brightman: “We [North Americans] arrogate to ourselves the very name of ‘American,’ which by right belongs to every citizen of North, Central, and South America” (qtd. in Romanell 1952, 5).

6 The best introduction to *la filosofía de lo mexicano* in English is Sánchez and Sanchez Jr. 2017.

DEFINING MEXICAN PHILOSOPHY PRAGMATICALLY

In presenting Anzaldúa as a Mexican philosopher, we face the interrelated problems of defining *Mexican* and defining *philosopher*. The distinctions we make are pragmatic and stipulative rather than metaphysical. In other words, they are calibrated to our present aims of demonstrating Anzaldúa's study of and contributions to the Mexican philosophical tradition. We are not trying to pick out the unchanging essences in the world that are *Mexican* or making transhistorical claims about what counts as *philosophy*. By calling something "Mexican" or "philosophical" we want to draw scholarly attention to unrecognized, understudied, and dismissed features of Anzaldúa's work, while recognizing that Anzaldúa perpetually wrestled with labels for herself and others.

The archival materials associated with the writing of *Borderlands / La Frontera* from 1983–87 fill seven boxes containing 112 folders. In an early draft, Anzaldúa considered dedicating the work to "all Chicanos and Mexicanos on both sides of the border," but also played with the split term "Chicano/Mexicano" (Box 31, Folder 13). For the final published version she deleted *Chicanos* and code-switched to "*a todos mexicanos on both sides of the border*," which suggests that for her own pragmatic purposes at the time, Anzaldúa was primarily interested in bridging the varieties of Mexican identity. In fact, another draft was "dedicated to all Mejicanos on both sides of the border no matter what they call themselves" (Box 32, Folder 7), which further suggests two things: 1) Anzaldúa recognized that what many people typically conceive as a clear border between Chicano vs. Mexicano or Mexican American vs. Mexican is in fact vague and indeterminate, just as she describes the borderlands that defy the physical boundaries of Mexico and the United States; 2) Anzaldúa recognized that classifying someone as Mexican rather than Chicano, or Chicano rather than Mexican American—to take just two examples—risks a certain amount of violence against their self-conception. To avoid contention, the sources of Anzaldúa's philosophy that we identify here as Mexican were all born in Mexico, lived there for most or all of their lives, and practiced philosophy in Spanish or Nahuatl—all factors that contribute to why they have not received much scholarly attention in the United States.

It is even more challenging to define and delimit who counts as a philosopher. From Anzaldúa's published works and unpublished notes in the archive, we know that she wanted to be considered a philosopher but felt excluded from what she called the "most closed of male sanctums: philosophy" (Box 234, Folder 14). Anzaldúa reports that she was interested in philosophy beginning in elementary school where she carried around books by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche (Reuman and Anzaldúa 31), and she took several philosophy courses in college and grad school. Long before she died, Anzaldúa imagined her own obituary where she

called herself “a great thinker, *philosopher*, writer and humanitarian” (Box 105, Folder 3; italics added), and toward the end of her life she labeled herself a “feministvisionaryspiritualactivistpoet-*philosopher* fiction writer” (*Reader 3*; italics added). In another note, she asked herself “what makes a philosopher?” and answered “scholarly self-study” (Box 102, Folder 5), hearkening back to Socrates and the Ancient Delphic command *gnothi seauton* or “know thyself.”⁷ In what follows we show how Anzaldúa took up the philosophical project of scholarly self-study by critically appropriating Mexican sources who had been asking “*What does it mean to be Mexican?*” for generations.

EXPLICITLY CITED MEXICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOURCES IN *BORDERLANDS / LA FRONTERA*

Anzaldúa quotes and footnotes many Mexican sources in *Borderlands / La Frontera* but only two who are clearly philosophers: the historian, anthropologist, and philosopher Miguel León-Portilla (91, 93); and the philosopher and politician José Vasconcelos (99). Of the two, only Vasconcelos is consistently recognized as a Mexican philosopher, but Miguel León-Portilla’s groundbreaking dissertation, “La filosofía náhuatl estudiada en sus fuentes” earned him a doctorate from the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) in 1956. His previous degree from Loyola University in Los Angeles, California, was an MA in Philosophy earned in 1951 with a thesis on Henri Bergson’s *Las dos fuentes de la moral y la religión*.⁸ These degrees unequivocally place León-Portilla in the discipline of philosophy—indeed, his work basically established the academic field of Nahuatl or Aztec philosophy—but the fact that he worked almost exclusively on Nahuatl philosophy throughout his career has no doubt led to his being categorized most frequently as a historian or an anthropologist. Reflecting on the Eurocentric disciplinary labels applied to León-Portilla’s work suggests that one of the many reasons that Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands / La Frontera* is not widely recognized as philosophy may be that it works a great deal with Nahuatl symbols and concepts, effectively obscuring the philosophical nature of her project, given the prejudice against the very possibility of indigenous philosophy, or what James Maffie has called “philosophy without Europe” (Maffie 24).

In a similar way, Anzaldúa is most frequently categorized as a Chicana or Mexican American even though she could also very comfortably respond

7 See Alessandri, “Anzaldúa as Philosopher,” for a more detailed examination of the archival evidence that Anzaldúa considered herself a philosopher.

8 León-Portilla’s prologue to the fiftieth anniversary edition of *La filosofía náhuatl estudiada en sus fuentes* explains that his first transformative encounter with Spanish translations of Nahuatl literature and poetry occurred while finishing his thesis on Bergson’s philosophy (9).

to the question “¿Qué eres?” with “soy mexicana” (*Borderlands* 84). The Mexicanness of her philosophical project is also harder for most US American scholars to recognize because they are less likely to know the work of Mexican philosophers like Vasconcelos and León-Portilla. One of Anzaldúa’s most important philosophical innovations and contributions to *la filosofía de lo mexicano* was to bridge the histories and philosophies of three different types of Mexicans⁹ in order to develop the subtitle of *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*: 1) the indigenous, Nahuatl-speaking Mexicans whose philosophical contributions were recognized by León-Portilla’s scholarship, 2) the mestizo, Spanish-speaking Mexicans whose philosophical contributions grew out of the educational system and philosophical milieu established largely by José Vasconcelos, and 3) the Chicana, or those we might call Chicax Mexican, who often speak both Spanish and English and whose identities are explored and reimagined throughout Anzaldúa’s philosophy.

Chapter by chapter, Anzaldúa weaves together the histories, movements, and identities of Mexicans, Indians, and Americans of many cultures while adding her own mestiza voice to the Philosophy of Mexicanness. The process culminates in what Anzaldúa calls her own “take” on Vasconcelos’s idea of *la raza cósmica*. Chapter seven develops *la conciencia de la mestiza*, which in its productive Spanish ambiguity is always both a consciousness and a conscience. Modifying the grammatical gender of the new motto that Vasconcelos devised for UNAM in 1920, Anzaldúa opens the chapter with the words, “*Por la mujer de mi raza hablará el espíritu*” (99). By interpreting the heart of Vasconcelos’s vision as one of inclusivity and pivoting toward her own queer identity, the chapter effectively reinterprets the mission of *la raza cósmica* as follows: “We come from all colors, all classes, all races, all time periods. Our role is to link people with each other” (106). It is therefore both ironic and tragic that Anzaldúa’s work has not been consistently and emphatically linked with the history of Mexican philosophy.

MEXICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOURCES NOT CITED IN *BORDERLANDS / LA FRONTERA*

The foregoing sketch should make plausible our reading of Anzaldúa as a Mexican philosopher whose work contributes to *la filosofía de lo mexicano*, but our case is bolstered by archival research. We have examined: 1) many of Anzaldúa’s notes and papers from as far back as her undergraduate education, 2) the scholarly sources that she taught, retaught, and tested her students on when she taught courses like “La Mujer Chicana,” “The Chicana in America,” or

9 It is worth repeating that “different types of Mexicans” operates as a heuristic typology that should not be confused with essentialist claims about Mexican identities.

“Chicanos and Their Culture” while enrolled as a doctoral student at UT Austin in the late 1970s (Sendejo); and 3) the books pertaining to Mexican philosophy that Anzaldúa owned, underlined, highlighted, and wrote marginalia in. The remainder of our paper sketches the archival evidence of the philosophical influence of eight Mexicans on Anzaldúa. The order does not reflect any kind of a ranking but rather our attempt to weave them together in a brief but coherent narrative.

JOSÉ VASCONCELOS (1882–1959)

The Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers contain five pages of handwritten notes (Box 165, Folder 25) that Anzaldúa took while reading the 1961 edition of José Vasconcelos’s *La raza cósmica*, which appears in a footnote in *Borderlands / La Frontera* (119). This means that unlike many other leaders of *el movimiento chicano*, who seem to have merely borrowed phrases from Vasconcelos because they were in the air (Stavans 43), Anzaldúa actually read Vasconcelos’s philosophy in order to critically rework it. Anzaldúa also required students in her Summer 1977 course, “Chicanos and their Culture” (Box 229, Folder 1), to read Vasconcelos’s “The Race Problem in Latin America.” Unlike *La raza cósmica*, it was available in English because Vasconcelos delivered it as a lecture at the University of Chicago in 1926 (*Aspects of Mexican Civilization*). Anzaldúa’s bulleted recap of Vasconcelos’s work indicates that the mission of *la raza cósmica* is “formar un nuevo tipo humano,” the new human type that *Borderlands / La Frontera* would later present transformed as *The New Mestiza*. Anzaldúa’s notes also suggest that she was particularly impressed that Vasconcelos “posited that a mixture of races does not create inferiority” and that *mestizaje* evolved much more quickly in Latin America (Box 165, Folder 25).

MIGUEL LEÓN-PORTILLA (1926–2019)

Anzaldúa’s personal library housed in the archive contains more than 5,000 books but none by Vasconcelos. In contrast, it contains eight different books by León-Portilla,¹⁰ at least three of which she almost certainly consulted to write *Borderlands / La Frontera*;¹¹ it contains two footnotes on page 119 that reference

10 Anzaldúa’s personal library at the archive technically contains eleven books by León-Portilla, but three are subsequent editions of the same book.

11 From the fact that Anzaldúa inscribed many of her books with the date and place of purchase, we know that she purchased León-Portilla’s *Native Mesoamerican Spirituality* on February 22, 1982, and *Aztec Thought and Culture: A Study of the Ancient Nahuatl Mind* on August 15, 1983. We can therefore say with considerable confidence that she read at least three books by León-Portilla before the publication of *Borderlands / La Frontera* in 1987.

Los antiguos mexicanos a través de sus crónicas y cantares (Book Box 27). While not cited in *Borderlands / La Frontera*, Anzaldúa highlighted and wrote marginal notes throughout her copy of *Aztec Thought and Culture: A Study of the Ancient Nahuatl Mind* (Book Box 65) shortly before beginning work on *Borderlands / La Frontera* in 1984. *Aztec Thought and Culture* is a translation of the work that earned León-Portilla his PhD in Philosophy, *La filosofía náhuatl estudiada en sus fuentes*. Unfortunately, the translated English title denies León-Portilla's most fundamental thesis, namely, that there is such a thing as Nahuatl *philosophy* that can be reconstructed using *Nahuatl* sources.¹² Despite the misleading translation of the title, the heart of León-Portilla's work was not lost on Anzaldúa, who highlighted almost every reference to "philosophy" or "philosopher" in the book. Like León-Portilla, she rejected any unbridgeable divide between poetry and philosophy, highlighting a question and answer from León-Portilla's introduction:

Had that restlessness of spirit, stemming from a sense of wonder and doubt, manifested itself in the rational inquiry into the nature of things which we call philosophy? . . . The poet is a commentator on life and existence; in his immediate and imaginative way, he is a philosopher. Among the Nahuas, then, as among the Greeks, it was the lyric poets who first became aware of and enunciated the great problems of human existence (*Aztec Thought and Culture* xxi).

Anzaldúa's interest in this quote sheds new light on her comment that *Borderlands / La Frontera* was originally conceived as "a book of poetry, mostly written to Chicanos looking for some symbols of what it meant to be Mexican." Since Anzaldúa felt like the poems would make the most sense if placed into a historical and cultural context she "added the introduction and it kept growing until it became seven chapters, half of the book" (Hernández and Anzaldúa 13). In other words, Anzaldúa's chronological process of writing *Borderlands / La Frontera* as a poet-philosopher proceeded from poetry to philosophy, just like the Aztec *filósofos-poetas* described by León-Portilla. Recovering the influence of León-Portilla on Anzaldúa's writing also helps us understand the way Anzaldúa

12 While most mainstream professional philosophers in the United States would likely consider León-Portilla a historian and/or anthropologist, the fact that he was fundamentally interested in philosophy was obvious to at least one professor of anthropology at Tulane University who reviewed *Los antiguos mexicanos* (the work cited by Anzaldúa in *Borderlands / La Frontera*) for the journal *American Anthropologist* in 1961, two years before the translation *Aztec Thought and Culture* appeared: "The result of this new approach to old material is that [León-Portilla's] style of writing suggests the 20th century philosopher rather than either the historian or anthropologist" (Robertson 1375).

conceived of its pedagogical function, which she further theorized in *Making Face, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras*, whose title references León-Portilla's description of the work of the Nahuatl sage, *filósofo*, or *tlatmatini* ["one who knows things"] who teaches people "to have and develop in themselves a face" (*Aztec Thought and Culture* 24).¹³

JUANA ARMANDA ALEGRÍA (1938–)

Anzaldúa assigned Juana Armanda Alegría's *Psicología de las mexicanas* to her "La Mujer Chicana" class of 1977 (Box 227, Folder 7). There is no copy of the book in the archive, but we speculate that, as in the case of Vasconcelos's *La raza cósmica*, it would have been very difficult for Anzaldúa to purchase in the United States. The use of the book for the course seems to have been Anzaldúa's own innovation because it is not mentioned in the Fall 1976 syllabus or reading list of Inés Hernández Tovar from whom Anzaldúa took the course. For the final exam, Anzaldúa asked questions about all three parts of Alegría's book, although the students who could not read Spanish were questioned on Shulasmith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*. Before Anzaldúa taught the course, it already contained a unit on Chicana psychology that drew upon the work of Chicana feminists like Anna Nieto-Gómez and Martha P. Cotera, so Anzaldúa must have believed that Alegría's book had something important to add.¹⁴ This information supports our thesis about the scholarly imperative to pay more attention to Anzaldúa's Mexican sources, but it also serves as a corrective for standard histories of Mexican philosophy that tend to exclude the work of women by unfairly policing the boundaries of philosophy (del Río). For example, Samuel Ramos's *El perfil del hombre y la cultura en México*, a work in philosophical psychology, is widely considered to be the foundational text that officially launched *la filosofía de lo mexicano* (Schmidt), whereas Alegría's philosophical psychology is typically ignored by philosophers and considered to be *merely* feminism.

What Anzaldúa seems to have found most important in Alegría's *Psicología de las mexicanas* is the way that the three parts of the book address the more general problems of contemporary sexism (Part I) by providing a revisionist feminist history of *la mujer mexicana* (Part II)—going all the way back to the Aztecs and running through various Mexican feminine archetypes including Coatlicue, La Malinche, La Virgen de Guadalupe, Sor Juana, La Llorona, and La Adelita—in order to transform the future (Part III) by rebelling against the

13 Anzaldúa highlighted this phrase in her copy of León-Portilla's *Aztec Thought and Culture* (Book Box 65). On page 13 of the same book, she highlighted a similar passage and wrote "face" in the margin.

14 For more about the history of the "La Mujer Chicana" class at UT Austin, see Sendejo.

“formas estereotipadas de la conducta femenina en nuestro país” to achieve liberation (144). Although *Borderlands / La Frontera* is even more ambitious in historical scope and subject matter, the basic structure resembles Alegría’s book with the important exception of the poetry that comprises the second part of *Borderlands / La Frontera*. Indeed, Anzaldúa could have written these words from Alegría’s Introduction: “I try to somehow tie everything together from the things that I have experienced myself as a woman and through other women” (Alegría 3; our translation). Both Mexican philosophers also had similar aims: what Alegría terms *concientización*, that is, “becoming conscious of...our circumstances as human beings” (13), Anzaldúa further developed as the philosophical path that leads toward *la conciencia de la mestiza*.

OCTAVIO PAZ (1914–1998)

Many of the long block quotes in *Psicología de las mexicanas* establish further organic connections with other important sources of Mexican philosophy that clearly influenced Anzaldúa. For example, Alegría quotes extensively from Octavio Paz’s *El laberinto de la soledad*, which Anzaldúa acquired in May 1977 as an English translation (Book Box 3), just as she was finishing teaching “La Mujer Chicana.” Anzaldúa heavily underlined Paz’s chapter “The Pachuco and Other Extremes.” Paz’s account of the *pachucos*’ “hybrid language and behavior” (*Labyrinth of Solitude* 18) fascinated Anzaldúa, as did Paz’s claim that “The pachuco does not want to become a Mexican again; at the same time, he does not want to blend into the life of North America” (14). The year before, in June 1976, Anzaldúa had acquired Paz’s *The Other Mexico: Critique of The Pyramid* (Book Box 69), a further development of the lecture he delivered at the University of Texas at Austin in 1969 where he reflected on the student demonstrations and revolutions that were happening throughout the world, including in Mexico and in the United States. Paz’s existentialist claim that “The Mexican is not an essence but a history” resonates with Anzaldúa’s approach in *Borderlands / La Frontera*, as does his claim that his work on Mexicanness was not “a search for our supposed being” but rather “a vision and, simultaneously, a revision” of what it means to be Mexican (vii). Anzaldúa’s archive contains seventeen books by Paz. Although we did not have time to systematically examine all of them, the archival research we present here establishes that there is a substantial organic connection between Paz and Anzaldúa in addition to the literary one so thoughtfully analyzed by Marisa Belausteguita.

SAMUEL RAMOS (1897–1959)

Another work that Alegría quotes frequently is Samuel Ramos’s *El perfil del hombre y la cultura en México* (1934), which is widely recognized as a founda-

tional text for *la filosofía de lo mexicano* (Schmidt). Anzaldúa owned the English translation, *Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico*, dating her acquisition “mayo 77, tejas Aztlán.” The book was required reading for Anzaldúa’s PhD coursework, and when she taught “Chicanos and Their Culture” during Summer 1977, she included exam questions about Ramos’s chapter “Psychoanalysis of the Mexican,” Paz’s “The Sons of La Malinche,” and Vasconcelos’s “The Race Problem in Latin America,” alongside questions on Armando Rendón’s *Chicano Manifesto* (Box 228, Folder 7). These juxtapositions in the way that Anzaldúa constructed her course clearly demonstrate that she was thinking about contemporary questions of Chicano/a identity in relation to the longer tradition of *la filosofía de lo mexicano*. Anzaldúa may have also revisited Ramos’s book while writing *Borderlands / La Frontera* since a list she wrote in June 1985, titled “Mexican pensadores,” names: Antonio Caso, Alfonso Reyes, Samuel Ramos, Octavio Paz, Edmundo O’Gorman, Leopoldo Zea, and José Gaos (Box 32, Folder 10). Below this list, she wrote: “Psychology of the Mexicano / Chicano” and under that: “El Perfil del hombre y la cultura en Mexico 1934 – Samuel Ramos.” She also wrote a few bulleted themes, including “fear of inferiority,” “self-denigration, self-disparagement,” “supposed inferiority of native culture,” and “Attitude of a nation which has its origins in a highly developed autochthonous civilization that was later reduced to colonial status. With the Chicano—experienced this twice” (Box 32, Folder 10).

Ramos’s basic hypothesis, which Anzaldúa highlighted in her copy of his book, was that “some expressions of Mexican character are ways of compensating for an unconscious sense of inferiority,” with the result that “the Mexican undervalues himself, committing in this way an injustice to his person” (9). Like Ramos, Anzaldúa sought to “eliminate the false premises of [Mexicans’] inferiority complex” (Ramos viii). Indeed, the passage where Anzaldúa discusses the inferiority complex of the Chicana reflects the basic structure of Ramos’s diagnosis:

No, it isn’t enough that she is female—a second-class member of a conquered people who are taught to believe that they are **inferior** because they have indigenous blood, believe in the supernatural, and speak a deficient language. Now she beats herself over the head for her “inactivity,” a stage that is as necessary as breathing. But that means being Mexican. All her life she’s been told that Mexicans are lazy. She has had to work twice as hard as others to meet the standards of the dominant culture which have, in part, become her standards (*Borderlands* 70–71; bold added).

According to Ramos, the way beyond the inferiority complex that Anzaldúa represents here is the development of new standards that humanize what the dominant culture has rendered subhuman, and this is just what Anzaldúa does

in developing *la conciencia de la mestiza*. By paying more critical attention to the roles of gender, language, sexuality, and spirituality, Anzaldúa's transformation of Ramos's framework makes a critical contribution to Mexican philosophy.

ROSARIO CASTELLANOS (1925–1974)

The centrality of gender, sexuality, and language in Anzaldúa's work bring us to our examination of Rosario Castellanos and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Anzaldúa most likely considered both poet-philosophers as kindred spirits, but it's unlikely that she would have read Castellanos's MA thesis in Philosophy at the UNAM, "Sobre cultura femenina" (1950), since it was largely unknown even by specialists until it was republished in 2005. Castellanos's thesis directly confronted the trilemma described by Anzaldúa in *Borderlands / La Frontera* that had not changed much since Sor Juana confronted it three centuries before: "For a woman of my culture there used to be only three directions she could turn: to the Church as a nun, to the streets as a prostitute, or to the home as a mother" (*Borderlands* 39). Just as Castellanos's thesis defied the stereotype that women are intellectually inferior, her subsequent work as a poet, literary critic, novelist, neoindigenist, and philosopher confronted the difficult historical fact that the dominant culture has made it almost impossible for women to be both mothers and creative beings.

Although Anzaldúa read at least some of Castellanos's poetry before publishing *Borderlands / La Frontera*,¹⁵ Castellanos's major influence came later. In a work plan titled "Mexican Feminist Theory and Autobiography" that Anzaldúa dated November 9, 1989, she wrote: "Read Rosario Castellanos—novels, theory-criticism, poetry, short stories and critical texts on her work" (Box 91, Folder 6). Anzaldúa had purchased *The Selected Poems of Rosario Castellanos* in January 1989 (Book Box 81), followed by a Spanish collection of her poems in December of 1989 (Book Box 103). At page 208 of this collection, "Poesía no eres tú," we found a bookmark where Anzaldúa had written "Intro to Caras 1st stanza autohistoria 2nd stage self-writing." This note clearly indicates that Anzaldúa was drawn to Castellanos's poetic practices of self-writing and philosophical reflections on self-making, which inspired Anzaldúa's *Making Face, Making Soul / Haciendo Caras*. Anzaldúa also worked on an essay titled "Self-representation and Identity" in 1990 that references Castellanos on page 14 (Box 95, Folder 14). We have not had the opportunity to trace Castellanos's influence more carefully, but Anzaldúa's archive contains twelve books by this author.

15 Anzaldúa's handwritten list of readings for ETS 374 La Mujer Chicana included Rosario Castellanos's poem "Silence Concerning an Ancient Stone," which Anzaldúa's notes describe as a "poem about identity, heritage, & creative process—Mexican Poet" (Box 227, Folder 7).

SOR JUANA INÉS DE LA CRUZ (1648–1695)

Alegría discusses Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz at length in *Psicología de las mexicanas*, as does Paz in *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, which Anzaldúa acquired in 1977 (Book Box 3). In fact, page 111 is dog-eared with “Sor Juana” written on the dog-ear. Anzaldúa highlighted much of Paz’s discussion of Sor Juana, and his reference in a footnote to her most famous philosophical letter, “Reply to Sor Filotea” is circled. This passage is underlined: “We can sense the melancholy of a spirit who never succeeded in forgiving herself for her boldness and her condition as a woman” (115). In Anzaldúa’s copy of Paz’s *One Earth, Four or Five Worlds: Reflections on Contemporary History*, which she acquired in 1987 (Book Box 3), she highlighted Paz’s claim that Sor Juana was “not only a great poet but also the intellectual conscience of her society” (139). Anzaldúa’s friend and now Anzaldúa scholar Randy Connor gave her a copy of Octavio Paz’s book *Sor Juana: Or, the Traps of Faith* in 1988 (Book Box 2). Anzaldúa also acquired Margaret Sayers Peden’s *A Woman of Genius: The Intellectual Autobiography of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* on October 12, 1988 (Book Box 108). Her copy of *A Sor Juana Anthology* is dated “24 agosto ’90 Santa Cruz” (Book Box 65). We did not have the time to examine these books for notes or highlighting, nor could we establish the date of a note card by Anzaldúa that names Sor Juana as a philosopher and her intellectual ancestor, but it reads: “Review: Intellectual Forerunners. What imploded in my consciousness: the fact that this woman (and other lesbian thinkers) are an actuality, that they dared enter the most closet closed [*sic?*] of male sanctums—philosophy. In my own racial background Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz, the first feminist of this hemisphere...” (Box 234, Folder 14).

JORGE CARRIÓN (1913–2005)

Alegría quoted frequently from Jorge Carrión’s *Mito y magia del mexicano* (1952), and Anzaldúa owned a photocopy of the book (Box 187, Folder 6). Although this photocopy contains no underlines, Anzaldúa wrote twelve handwritten pages of notes about the book in August 1983 (Box 165, Folder 35), just before she began work on *Borderlands / La Frontera*. These notes add depth to our understanding of the creative process by which Anzaldúa bridged the classic *filosofía de lo mexicano* written by figures like Vasconcelos and Ramos, who, at most, hollowly affirmed the contributions of Mexico’s indigenous people in the making of the Mexican, with León-Portilla’s scholarly work on Nahuatl philosophy. Published as part of a series called *Ensayos sobre el mexicano*, Carrión’s book opens with reflections on the *choque* between Spanish and Indian that created what Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands / La Frontera* later described as “una nueva raza, el mestizo, el mexicano (people of mixed Indian and Spanish blood)” (27). Carrión’s work brings these two groups of people and cultures

closer together by examining the way that Mexicans have relied on a kind of mythical and magical thinking and practice alongside a primitive science in their attempts to interpret and influence reality—all the way from the time of this first *choque* up to the present day *choque* when the souls of Mexicans are colliding with the technical culture of the United States. In Carrión's analysis, Mexicans are thus pinched between the Spanish conquistadors of the past—who imposed their religion, ideas, political orders, and customs—and the North American marauders of the present who impose their science, technologies, and market ideology.

Just as Carrión presented the effects of these *choques* on the Mexican psyche and identity in Mexico, Anzaldúa's work explores their effects on the Mexican psyche and identity in the United States. In fact, Anzaldúa uses the exact same word in Spanish, *choque*, to describe the cultural collision leading towards the creation of *la conciencia de la mestiza*: “*El choque de un alma atrapado entre el mundo de espíritu y el mundo de la técnica a veces la deja entullada*. Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems, *la mestiza* undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war” (*Borderlands* 100). While Anzaldúa takes up the Aztec tradition in a very different way from Carrión by engaging in acts of feminist revision, she nevertheless develops something like what Carrión's chapter calls the “Psychological Route of Quetzalcoatl” in her *Borderlands / La Frontera* chapter titled “La Herencia de Coatlicue.” This is further developed in her later essay “Let us be the healing of the wound,” where she calls it the Coyolxauhqui imperative to heal and achieve integration (*Light in the Dark*).

In sum, Anzaldúa interpolated the philosophical and psychological history of Chicanas into Carrión's philosophical and psychological history of Mexicans. This is clear from the first bullet of Anzaldúa's notes on Carrión's *Mito y magia del mexicano*: “humillada en la carne y la conciencia como mexicano por el español y como chicana por lo blanco, lo gringo” (Box 165, Folder 35). Many scholars have taken up Anzaldúa's call “to recover and reshape my spiritual identity” (*Borderlands* 110) in rebellion against the “white rationality” that wanted her and other people of color “to ignore, forget, kill those fleeting images of the soul's presence and of the spirit's presence” (58), but as far as we know, no one has recognized Carrión as one of Anzaldúa's theoretical sources for this project.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND FURTHER RESEARCH

In Anzaldúa's notes on Carrión, we once again see evidence of her belief that poetry could play a special role in healing the wounds of Mexican people and others: “The poets have a powerful candle for exploring in themselves

what is not an impediment but rather a [productive] ambivalence in their magical and logical character. The best works grow out of these antitheses” (Box 165, Folder 125; our translation). Our research has grown out of our conviction that Anzaldúa created many such works—at once magical and logical, philosophical and poetic—and we hope that our essay has succeeded in illuminating them as important contributions that drew substantially upon Mexican sources to further develop *la filosofía de lo mexicano* or the Philosophy of Mexicanness. Anzaldúa’s conception of her calling as a poet-philosopher has far more connection and resonance with the long history of Mexican philosophy than scholars have recognized, from the way the Nahuatl *filósofo-poetas* are portrayed in León-Portilla’s study, to Sor Juana’s love of science and poetry, to Vasconcelos’s belief that the coming society of *la raza cósmica* should be organized around aesthetic principles.

In a less direct way we also hope to have rendered plausible the claim that Mexican philosophy has a past, present, and future in the United States by demonstrating the continuity between Anzaldúa’s philosophical concerns as a Chicana and the philosophical concerns of her eight Mexican philosophical sources. We are certainly not alone in believing that Anzaldúa’s work is critical for both Mexican and US-Chicanx philosophy. To borrow language from a book collaboratively authored by thirteen philosophers that makes multiple references to Anzaldúa while exploring the relation between Latin American and Latinx philosophy, we could say that Anzaldúa’s work shows how Mexican and Chicane philosophy “are both related and distinct, and that it is now difficult to draw a non-arbitrary line between them” (R. Sanchez 7).¹⁶

Setting aside various border disputes, we have attempted to achieve a reasonably comprehensive understanding of the Mexican sources of Anzaldúa’s philosophy, but we do know at least two specific ways in which our essay is inadequate and thus calls for further research and commentary. First, Anzaldúa was more heavily influenced by Mexican women writers—typically classified as poets and novelists and feminists rather than as philosophers (del Río)—than we have had time to investigate. For example, the archive contains many hours of audio recordings of Anzaldúa talking to students and faculty about “Contemporary Mexican Women Writers” (Box 155, Folders 32–35; Box 156, Folders 1–9), but we only had time to listen to snippets. There are also far more written materials to examine. Second, although we live and work at Anzaldúa’s undergraduate alma mater in the Rio Grande Valley and our understanding of Mexican

16 Anzaldúa’s work is discussed in five out of the book’s twelve chapters, demonstrating her tremendous importance to both Latin American and Latinx philosophy, as well as the more specific categories of both Mexican and Chicane philosophy.

philosophy is conversant with much of the excellent scholarship from Mexico, our vantage point is nevertheless from the United States. This not only shapes but also limits what we have been able to see. We hope that others who read this will be able to fill in some of our blind spots and make more connections.

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