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Malik Raymond
Georgia Southern University

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Gloria Anzaldúa's El Mundo Zurdo: The Necessity of a Historical Assessment
An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in History.

By
Malik Raymond
Under the mentorship of Christina Abreu

ABSTRACT

This thesis revolves around Chicana lesbian feminist Gloria Anzaldúa and one of her more important theories, *El Mundo Zurdo*. *El Mundo Zurdo* was a theory that focused on the marginalized people and the need for unity amongst them; however, up to this point, no historical analysis has been done on this theory. Through piecing together information from interviews and Anzaldúa's literature, this thesis serves as a biography of her first forty years of life to address from where the theory came, and becomes a bridge to link Anzaldúa to the wider Chicana, Third World feminist, and gay and lesbian theories.

Thesis Mentor: _____

Dr. Christina Abreu

Honors Director: _____

Dr. Steven Engel

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Department Name
University Honors Program
Georgia Southern University

Gloria Anzaldúa's *El Mundo Zurdo*:

The Necessity of a Historical Assessment

Background/Biography

Self-described as a “Chicana dyke-feminist, Tejana patlache poet, writer, and cultural theorist,” Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa was born on September 26, 1942, in Raymondville, Texas.¹ She was the oldest of four children to Urbano and Amalia Anzaldúa, both migrant workers. She spent her early childhood in Rio Grande Valley in South Texas moving to and from Hargrill and Raymondville. She began writing during her second stint in Raymondville, and eventually graduated from Edinburg High School in 1962, but her father died five years before graduating. Afterwards she briefly attended Texas Women’s University (TWU), quitting in 1964 due to a lack of funds. Eventually, Anzaldúa returned to school in 1965 to attend Pan-American University (PAU) and graduated with a B.A. in English in 1968.²

In 1969, Anzaldúa attended summer classes at the University of Texas-Austin (UTA), while teaching at a preschool in San Juan, Texas (along with special education and high school courses). It was at this time that she focused on the writings of indigenous Mexican cultures and

¹ “Gloria Anzaldúa,” Universidad de Huelva, Spain. Last modified October 14, 2004. Accessed, October 18, 2016.

² Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2009), 325

became involved with activist groups in the Chicano Movement, such as the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO).³ By 1972, she had received her M.A. in English from UTA.⁴

In 1973, Anzaldúa worked as a liaison for migrant workers' children within Indiana's public education system. She also visited Notre Dame, where she attended her first creative writing workshop. While in Indiana, she wrote extensively and started to study the occult. A year later, she returned to Austin to enroll in Texas' comparative literature program. She simultaneously worked with activists, including those involved in the farm workers' movements, civil rights, women's rights, and the Chicano movement. By 1977, however, she had decided to pursue a career in writing and departed for California.⁵

After briefly stopping in San Diego, she relocated to San Francisco and became a full-time writer. In 1978, she served on the Feminist Writer's Guild Steering Committee.⁶ She also met two figures that played an important role in the process of creating *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*: Merlin Stone and Cherrie Moraga.⁷ Moraga

³ The Chicano Movement was a civil rights movement that began in the 1960s that was influenced by the larger Civil Rights Movement of the late 1950s and 60s. Some figures, such as Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, concentrated their efforts with the Mexican-American farm workers that involved forms of protest such as The Delano Grape Strike. Some leaders, such as Reies Lopez Tijerina, founded groups that were based in a grassroots movement that had more active confrontations with authorities (e.g. Tijerina founded the Alianza Federal de Mercedes [Federal Land of Grant Alliance] that called for violations on the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and was more confrontational with authorities). Other groups, such as the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) [which was founded by students such as Jose Angel Gutierrez and Mario Compean] proposed the formation of a third political party in Texas (i.e. La Raza Unida Party). See Neil Foley, *Mexicans in the Making of America*, Belknap Press, 2014, 160-73. Other notable books on the Chicano movement include F. Arturo Rosales' *Chicano! History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Arte Publico Press, 1996) and Maylei Blackwell's *Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (University of Texas Press, 2016).

⁴ Anzaldúa and Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 325.

⁵ Anzaldúa and Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 325-6.

⁶ The Feminist Writers Guild Steering Committee consisted of both at-large and chapter members of the Feminist Writers Guild (a national union of feminist writers of large significance in the 1970s) with the objectives of serving the larger national organization and the needs of every member alike. For more of an example of its functions, see Rochelle H. DuBois, "The Feminists' Writers Guild," *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 9 Vol. 3 (1981) 3, 46.

⁷ *This Bridge Called My Back* (1982) was an anthology edited by Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga and compiled by self-described radical women of color (a significant number of them lesbian) in response to marginalization they received from white feminists during Second Wave feminism. *This Bridge* was a landmark book in the creation of Third World feminism, which was also in response to discrimination faced in Second Wave feminism.

developed a friendship with Anzaldúa that spanned for the rest of the Anzaldúa's life. She also began teaching women's studies courses at San Francisco State University. In 1981, she relocated to the East Coast, living in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Brooklyn, where she gave lectures at various conferences and workshops throughout the country. She published *This Bridge* in 1983. In 1985, she returned to the Bay area, then relocated to Santa Cruz, where she worked on and completed her most acclaimed work, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (which she completed in 1987). After the success of *Borderlands*, she would continue with publications such as *Haciendo Caras/Making Faces* and *La Prieta*, but her longtime struggle with diabetes during the last ten years of her life led to her death in 2004.⁸

Intended Contribution:

Of Anzaldúa's many theories, such as *nepantla*, *nueva mestiza*, new tribalism, and *la facultad*, the one that receives the least amount of scholarly and critical attention is *El Mundo Zurdo* (the left-handed world).⁹ According to AnaLouise Keating, it "represents relational difference...applied to alliances, it indicates communities based on commonalities, visionary locations where people from diverse backgrounds with diverse needs and concerns coexist and work together to bring about revolutionary change."¹⁰ How did Anzaldúa define *El Mundo Zurdo*? I argue that negative and positive influences Anzaldúa encountered prior to the publication of *This Bridge* did. However, due to the scant amount of analysis about *El Mundo Zurdo*, I intend to demonstrate biographically that Anzaldúa's interactions with people, organizations, and events directly shaped the theory.

⁸ Anzaldúa and Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 326-9

⁹ *Nepantla* is a Nahuatl word that means "in-between space" that represented temporal spatial, psychic and/or intellectual points(s) of crisis. *Nueva mestizas* were people who inhabit multiple worlds because of their gender sexuality, color, class, bodies, spiritual beliefs, etc. New tribalism describes an affinity-based approach to alliance making and identify information. *La facultad* is a term for an intuitive form of knowledge that includes but goes beyond logical thought and empirical analysis (Anzaldúa and Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 321-2)

¹⁰ Anzaldúa and Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 321

El Mundo Zurdo originally was a theme of a workshop during her time in San Francisco in the late 70s and early 80s titled “El Mundo Surdo”.¹¹ Around this period, she conversed with various women of color in the process of acquiring works for *This Bridge*. Although Anzaldúa mentioned names of specific women of color mentioned in interviews, the entire process of how *This Bridge* reached publication is scant, at best. Her stints with Chicana organizations such as MAYO are scarcely mentioned, and issues with both Chicanos and heterosexual Chicanas receive little attention. These two aspects are important when considering that she developed her theories (including *El Mundo Zurdo*) within the backdrop of the various civil rights movements of the late twentieth century. As Anzaldúa stated in her essay titled “*El Mundo Zurdo* (the Left-Handed World):” “The rational, the patriarchal, and the heterosexual have held sway and legal tender for too long. Third World women, lesbians, feminists, and feminist-oriented men of all colors are banding and bonding together to right that balance. Only *together* [italics in original] can we be a force.”¹² Who were these people that influenced her? Where did they meet and interact? For how long? Moreover, were those interactions and influences positive or negative? Piecing together the answers to these questions can best be achieved by closely examining the first four decades of Anzaldúa’s life.

By critiquing the current literature involving *El Mundo Zurdo* and looking into what might have influenced Anzaldúa prior to the publication of *This Bridge*, it should provide a bridge for historians and other scholars dealing with Chicanxs, feminists, women of color, and LBGTs (among others). I shall begin with a brief overview of the existing historiography and

¹¹ According to Keating, the original title “El Mundo Surdo” reflected the South Texas pronunciation with Surdo, and during the copyediting stage of “El Mundo Surdo” it was switched to “El Mundo Zurdo” without her knowledge, which Anzaldúa eventually accepted and adopted after originally being displeased with the change (*The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 321).

¹² Anzaldúa; Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 50. “El Mundo Zurdo: The Left-Handed World”, first appeared as a subsection in the anthology *This Bridge Called My Back* under the main title “La Prieta” (the Dark One).

literary analyses about Anzaldúa in order to inform the reader. Then I will critique what the general issues are with those articles that typically analyze Anzaldúa. Next, I will examine articles and essays that discussed the concept of *El Mundo Zurdo* and analyze where historical research could benefit our understanding. Then, I will give a biography of Anzaldúa from her childhood to the early 1980s in order to demonstrate that Anzaldúa's life can be assessed historically in order to better understand *El Mundo Zurdo*. From there, I will argue that historians interested in understanding Anzaldúa's work need to begin with an analysis of *El Mundo Zurdo* in order to map the multiple and overlapping influences that shaped her writings, including Third World feminism, the gay rights movement, and Chicana history. In doing so, I will focus on her relationships with other contemporary writers and intellectuals and highlight key moments in her personal and professional lives that influenced *El Mundo Zurdo*.

Summary & Analysis of General Anzaldúa-related Articles

This section offers a general summary and assessment of writings on Anzaldúa, organized mostly by theme. However, those themes generally centered themselves on Anzaldúa's masterpiece *Borderlands/La Frontera*. The book generally is the subject of literary analysis that involves the author comparing some of the themes found in *Borderlands* to similar themes found in other works of literature.

One example was Christina Boyles' "And the Gulf Did Not Devour Them: The Gulf as a Site of Transformation in Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* and [Barbara] Kingsolver's *The Lacuna*." Boyles used *Borderlands* as the point of comparison because she wanted to address critics who said *The Lacuna* contained gaps that took away from the story's message. Within the article, Boyles made comparisons with Anzaldúa's background in the Rio Grande Valley and with *The Lacuna*'s main character Harrison Shepherd's border-crossing travels of the Rio Grande and the

Gulf of Mexico. She discussed how Anzaldúa's personal and cultural identity (*nepantla*, code-switching, and homosexual identity) was similar for Harrison and his embracing of his mestizo, homosexual identity with an Aztec sun god. Boyles compared his travel through the Rio Grande as akin to the *nepantla* process in *Borderlands*.¹³ The literary analysis appeared once again in Juan D. Mah y Busch's "Beyond Anticolonial Hope and Postcolonial Despair," in which the characters Ariel and Caliban from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and their perspectives on hope were cross-analyzed through Jose Enrique Rodo's *Ariel* and Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*.¹⁴ He contextually situated *Ariel* in the era in which it was published (pre-Roosevelt, pre-Mexican Revolution, early U.S. imperialism) to compare the slave master Prospero with colonialism, Caliban with American Imperialism, and Ariel with liberating Latinos. However, Rodo's *Ariel* lacked any indigenous representation and the elements were heavily Eurocentric. Mah y Busch juxtaposed this with Anzaldúa's concept of *una herida abierta* (an open wound) that represented the intersectionality of oppressions she and other Chicanas faced and the Chicano national homeland myth in "The Homeland Aztlan/El otro Mexico."¹⁵ As a result, the indigenous myth in "The Homeland Aztlan" functioned more analogously with Caliban's concept of hope.¹⁶

¹³ Christina Boyles, "And the Gulf Did Not Devour Them: The Gulf as a Site of Transformation in Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* and Kingsolver's *The Lacuna*", *The Southern Literary Journal* 46, No. 2 (Spring 2014), 193-207.

¹⁴ Jose Enrique Rodo (d. 1917) was an Uruguayan essayist who helped ushered in the Latin American "Generation of Founders" with his work *Ariel* in 1900, in which he called Latin Americans (represented by *Ariel*) for a return to Ancient Greek and contemporary European (particularly French) ideals instead of the individualistic and materialistic nature of Anglo-Saxon and U.S. culture (represented by Caliban) (*Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

¹⁵ Anzaldúa coined the term "Una herida abierta" to describe the relationship between Third World and first world people in which the third world bleeds when making contact with the first, and before the scab forms it forms a new identity which culminated as a border culture which reinforced an "us vs. them" dichotomy (Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Aunt Lute Books, San Francisco, 3rd ed. 2007), 25. "The Homeland Aztlan/El Otro Mexico" contains the section which described *una herida abierta*.

¹⁶ Juan D Mah y Busch. "Beyond Anticolonial Hope and Postcolonial Despair: A Chicana-Feminist Reconfiguration," *At the Interface/Probing the Boundaries* (Vol. 67) 2010, 164-78.

Other articles used *Borderlands* to compare philosophical ideas and theories, such as Jose David Saldivar's article, "Unsettling Race, Coloniality, and Caste." He attempted to link border-thinking (*pensamiento fronterizo*) in Chicana studies with Peruvian social scientist Anibal Quijano's concept of "coloniality of power" on a transnational scale.¹⁷ Saldivar used Anzaldúa's *nepantlism* to argue against historian Fredrick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis by stating that her identity from a postcolonial reading represents a "feminist writer fundamentally caught between various hegemonic colonial and postcolonial languages" (i.e. *autohistoria-teoría*).¹⁸ He argued that the linguistic presentation of *Borderlands* best articulated *autohistoria-teoría* and saw it as an update of W.E.B. DuBois' "double-consciousness" by merging in the Tex-Mex dialects and Chicana "pachuco" jargon of the South Texas region to create the new mestiza ideology in *Borderlands* that transcended dualistic thought.¹⁹ Linking with Latin American philosophical tradition continued in Andrea J. Pitts' "Toward an Aesthetics of Race: Bridging the Writings of

¹⁷ Border Thinking was a concept articulated in *Borderlands* that theorist Walter Dignolo later took up and defined as knowledge outside of the colonial matrix of power, which included using non-traditional sources of knowledge and expression. "Border Thinking". *Global Social Theory*. Accessed March 18, 2017.

<https://globalsocialtheory.org/concepts/border-thinking/>

Anibal Quijano (b. 1928) is a Peruvian humanist and thinker who coined his "coloniality of power" idea after the rise of Cholas asserting their own identity in Peru. It was based off on the hierarchal concepts established by European powers in the sixteenth century but legitimized by physiocratic and biological models of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that divided the world into races and fixed, immobile places on the social ladder (Mabel Moraña, Enrique D. Dussel, Carlos A. Jáuregui, *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, Duke University Press, 280).

¹⁸ Jose David Saldivar, "Unsettling Race, Coloniality, and Caste: Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Martinez's *Parrot in the Oven*, and Roy's *The God of Small Things*" *Cultural Studies* 21, Nos. 2-3, 348-50. Frederick Jackson Turner (d. 1932) was an American historian who coined the "Frontier thesis" in 1893 which he explained to the American Historical Association that the 1890 U.S. Census showed the closing of the frontier and how the expansion of settlers further west helped to shape a distinct American culture in contrast to the European culture by being more democratic, less authoritarian, and less class consciousness, which shaped academic discussion on the frontier until the 1980s ("How Have American Historians Viewed the Frontier?" John Whitehead, 2001, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/european/mofc/whitehead.html>). *Autohistoria-teoría* is an Anzaldúa term to denote a relational form of autobiographical writing that includes both life story and self-reflection during the writing process (Anzaldúa and Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, p. 319).

¹⁹ Saldivar, "Unsettling Race, Coloniality, and Caste", 351-53. W.E.B. DuBois (d. 1963) was an African-American scholar and theorist whose double consciousness articulated the "twoness" experienced by black people because of their undervalued and oppression in the mainstream white American society (Stanford Encyclopedia. "Double Consciousness", last modified March 21, 2016. Accessed March 17 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/double-consciousness/>

Gloria Anzaldúa and Jose Vasconcelos.” Pitts argued in three parts that the typical readings of Anzaldúa’s and Jose Vasconcelos’ aesthetics could supplement one another to help frame contemporary philosophical discussions of racial perception. Pitts first examined Anzaldúa’s works from the Latin American literature canon in order draw a closer connection to Vasconcelos.²⁰ Then Pitts detailed the life of Vasconcelos that led to his later cultural and political philosophies directly situated against U.S. cultural influence, in particular his “La raza cosmica.” In the final section, she noted that both Vasconcelos’ *indigenismo* and Anzaldúa’s *mestizaje* and its *shadow side* placed culture at the forefront of unity with their theories. However, Vasconcelos did not draw from as many (non-European) sources as Anzaldúa. Therefore, the differences would help Anzaldúa readers better consider the “good, bad and the ugly” of Vasconcelos’ views, according to Pitts.²¹

Studies that compare Anzaldúa’s works with western philosophy are also common, as in articles like Jorge Capetillo-Ponce’s “Exploring Gloria Anzaldúa’s Methodology in *Borderlands/La Frontera—The New Mestiza*.” Though he stressed that Anzaldúa did not attempt to achieve a specific system with her writing, he still attempted deeper comprehension of *Borderlands* by invoking notable Western theorists/philosophers. When Capetillo-Ponce

²⁰ Andrea J. Pitts. “Toward an Aesthetics of Race: Bridging the Writings of Gloria Anzaldúa and Jose Vasconcelos,” *Inter-American Journal of Philosophy* 5, No. 1 (May 2014): 83. Jose Vasconcelos (d. 1948) was a Mexican educator and philosopher who articulated “La raza cosmica” to articulate the coming of a spiritual/aesthetic era that would eliminate ethnic barriers and the mixture of the races which was already occurring would lead to an entirely new race. Jose Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race/La raza cosmica: A Bilingual Edition*, ed. Didier T. Jaen. (The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1979), ix-x.

²¹ Pitts, “Towards an Aesthetics of Race,” 94. Within *indigenismo*, it largely focused on the indigenous problems of Mexico, which included numerous dialects, illiteracy, alcoholism, religious superstition and fanaticism. As secretary of public education from (1921-24), Vasconcelos went on a redemption campaign of the people through agrarian and social reforms. With the latter, he felt that success could be best achieved through the arts and literature. More information in Eduardo Mijangos Díaz’s and Alexandra López Torres’ “El problema del indigenismo en el debate intelectual posrevolucionario” *Signos Históricos*. 13 Vol. 25, (2011). Anzaldúa’s *mestizaje* (Spanish for “mixture”) referred to transformed combinations (*The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* p. 321); the *shadow side* (or beasts) in her essay “Let us be the healing of the wound”, she referred to the dark aspects of an entity (e.g. a person, a country) that she felt compelled to solve by art (and writing) (*The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, pp. 303-05).

discussed Nueva Mestiza as a concept, he referenced Freud's concept of the ego (among his other theories) as an idea she directly repurposed from its male/dualistic biases, which seemed appropriate given her criticism of Freud in *Borderlands*. However, he stressed at the end of the article that the non-western, Mexican, and Chicano influences had to be analyzed in depth in order to understand her methodology.²²

Other Anzaldúa articles also seem to compare her to different people in order to explain her theories. For example, Todd R. Ramlow in his article "Bodies in the Borderlands: Gloria Anzaldúa and David Wojnarowicz's Mobility Machines" compared Anzaldúa to AIDS activist and artist David Wojnarowicz to extend Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* in order to show their similarities with multiplicity by creating a term called "Prosthetic Subjectivity".²³ Ramlow believed Anzaldúa's and Wojnarowicz's shared similarities of living on the sexual periphery (Wojnarowicz was gay), deaths to long-term illnesses, and general differences from most people could allude to the alliance Anzaldúa spoke of in *Borderlands*. Ramlow focused on the over-policing of the U.S./Mexico borderlands reinforcing the "us vs. them" concept to conclude that both Anzaldúa and Wojnarowicz both saw observation and witnessing as paramount to challenge oppressions and concepts of binaries and dualism that empower them. As a result, he coined the term "Prosthetic Subjectivity" that fulfilled his ideas of Anzaldúa's and Wojnarowicz's multiplicity due to the way they drew attention to the "other" by not covering up or erasing psychological differences like prosthetics typically do.²⁴

²² Jorge-Capetillo Ponce, "Exploring Gloria Anzaldúa's Methodology in *Borderlands/La Frontera—The New Mestiza*", *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, 4, Special Issue (Summer 2008), 93

²³ David Wojnarowicz (d. 1992) was an American artist, photographer, and writer who later became an AIDS activist after contracting the disease.

²⁴ Todd R. Ramlow, "Bodies in the Borderlands: Gloria Anzaldúa's and David Wojnarowicz's Mobility Machines," *MELUS* 31, No. 3 (Fall 2006): 171-81

Some articles focus strictly on Anzaldúa's influence within physical boundaries, such as Maria Herrera-Sobek's "Gloria Anzaldúa: Place, Race, Language and Sexuality in the Magic Valley." Herrera-Sobek linked those themes in the title to her time in the Magic Valley (Rio Grande Valley) in southeastern Texas. Herrera-Sobek stressed the significance of Mexican and Mexican-American labor sustaining the Magic Valley, and Anzaldúa (along with other Chicaxs) returning them their heritage. She explained this by giving historical background, though she focused solely in Texas.²⁵ Other approaches to Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* included international perspectives on her theories. In 2011, *Signs* published a series of articles from a symposium dedicated to analyzing theories of Anzaldúa from an international perspective called "Comparative Perspectives Symposium: Gloria E. Anzaldúa, an International Perspective," led by Chicana professor Norma E. Cantu.²⁶ Academics implemented and discussed Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* in places such as Spain, Mexico, the Ukraine, the Canary Islands, and central European Countries such as Austria, Poland, and the Czech Republic.²⁷

Some articles do attempt to analyze Anzaldúa outside of *Borderlands*. For example, in Sarah Ohmer's "Gloria E. Anzaldúa's Decolonizing Ritual de Conocimiento," she offered a general overview of Anzaldúa's notable works (*This Bridge Called My Back*, *Borderlands*, *Making Faces*, and *Interviews/Entrevistas*) and contrasted them with one of her last works, *This Bridge We Call Home*. Ohmer argued that Anzaldúa recognized the limits of her earlier works and stated that they served as an epistemology that is "homogenous, denotative, and ex[c]lusive."²⁸ Anzaldúa attempted to reverse this by focusing on the "path of conocimiento"

²⁵ Maria Herrera-Sobek: Gloria Anzaldúa: Place, Race, Language, and Sexuality in the Magic Valley, *PMLA*, 121, No. 1 (Jan. 2006), pp. 266-71

²⁶ Norma E. Cantu (b. 1947) is a Chicana professor who specializes in Latinx and Chicax literature, border studies, folklore, and women's studies, among others.

²⁷ The University of Chicago Press; *Signs* 37, No. 1 (September 2011), 1-52

²⁸ Sarah Ohmer, "Gloria E. Anzaldúa's Decolonizing Ritual de Conocimiento," *Confluencia* 26 Vol. 1 (Fall 2010), 144

(knowledge).²⁹ Ohmer stressed this to illustrate how Anzaldúa intended to dismantle the walls of the movement stemming from Third World feminism epistemology, which was to Ohmer a “house full of nostalgia.”³⁰

Many of the articles that discuss Anzaldúa have mainly focused on *Borderlands*, but others focus on theories articulated in either *Borderlands*, or post-*Borderlands*. The majority of the articles discussed here have mainly focused on a general theory of Anzaldúa’s that stemmed from *Borderlands*, its implementation, and occasionally involved a personal component in terms of its influence. Because of *Borderlands*’ status as Anzaldúa’s magnum opus and accessibility due to its hybrid genres that consisted of poetry, essays, and memoirs, it has clouded any avenues to understand how Anzaldúa reached the stage to even write *Borderlands*.

This Bridge was a landmark book in its own right. By detailing the history of the publication of *This Bridge*, I intend to demonstrate that it should be the focal book to understand *El Mundo Zurdo*, and not only because *El Mundo Zurdo* was the name of a subsection in the book. For example, in Maria-Herrera-Sobek’s article, she mentioned how she and Anzaldúa both shared a common background with being punished by teachers who did not want them speaking Spanish.³¹ However, her agenda to personally relate with Anzaldúa along with an excessive use of *Borderlands* prohibits readers from better understanding their plights growing up in South Texas. In Salvidar’s article, he referenced the “pachuco” jargon of the region, but did not go into further detail with examples. Anzaldúa mentioned some of those events earlier in *This Bridge*, and by understanding the history of *El Mundo Zurdo*, both topics can be explained more

²⁹ Anzaldúa used *conocimiento* to elaborate on her *Borderlands* theories of “mestiza consciousness” and “la facultad” by combining elements of both theories (the non-binary connectionist mode of thinking of the former and the oppressive contexts under which the theory must develop with the latter) to underscore and further develop the theories of those theories. (Anzaldúa and Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 320).

³⁰ Ohmer, “Gloria E. Anzaldúa’s Decolonizing Ritual de Conocimiento”, 151

³¹ Herrera-Sobek, “Gloria Anzaldúa”, 268

thoroughly. Even with Sarah Ohmer's article, the focus on *This Bridge We Call Home* has its obvious influence from *This Bridge Called My Back* due to both books being anthologies and the former's title obviously alluded to *TBCMB*. To find out why Ohmer talked about Anzaldúa having issues with Third World women's nostalgic view of *TBCMB*, I argue that one must understand *El Mundo Zurdo* as a concept historically.

Another issue with some articles is more about excessive focus with western or Latin American philosophers/theorists that were not Anzaldúa's personal contemporaries. In Capetillo-Ponce's work, its focus was exclusively on Western philosophers from Michael Foucault to Karl Marx. The articles about Latin American philosophers such as Vasconcelos (Pitts) and Rodo (Mah y Busch) talked about their influences under European ideologies. While Pitts' and Mah y Busch's articles both addressed Anzaldúa's indigenous focus in contrast, I intend to map out the European and non-European influences from a biographical standpoint to better understand *El Mundo Zurdo* from this perspective as well. More importantly, I want to mention the influences of Anzaldúa's contemporaries that she met. Before this, however, I must give background to the concept of *El Mundo Zurdo* from articles specifically discussing the term.

Summary and Analysis of *El Mundo Zurdo* Topics

Although articles on *El Mundo Zurdo* as a concept are scarce, a few cover the topic in some fashion. One example is "Gloria Anzaldúa's *El Mundo Zurdo*: Exploring a Relational Feminist Theology of Interconnectedness" by Robyn Henderson-Espinoza. In the article, Espinoza made the argument that Anzaldúa's work was a novel feminist theology stemming from a radical commitment to interconnectedness and rationality. In order for Anzaldúa to accomplish this, she invited women of different backgrounds to delve into the concept embodying the relationality she invoked. However, using *El Mundo Zurdo* Henderson-Espinoza

argued that different Anzaldúa concepts tied into a notion of relationality that included *conocimiento* (knowledge) and *spirituality-in-accion* (spiritual activism).³² The latter concept focused less upon gods and more upon forging alliances with new people. Henderson-Espinoza then suggests that spiritual activism moves towards a theology of relationality and interconnectedness articulated by Anzaldúa's *El Mundo Zurdo*, as it "call[ed] for a deep commitment to the everydayness of relationality and connection across diverse spectrums of bodies and things."³³

However, Anzaldúa's external influences for those ideas were missing to better understand her as a person, not just Anzaldúa the theorist. Since *El Mundo Zurdo* invited people from all disadvantaged backgrounds, it would suffice to describe more of Anzaldúa's encounters that led to her theories. Of course, given the nature of Henderson-Espinoza's paper (i.e. feminist theology), her ability to cover this subject is limited, and I intend to complement it.

The next set of works that dealt with *El Mundo Zurdo* were in the anthology *EntreMundos/AmongWorlds: New Perspectives on Gloria Anzaldúa* by AnaLouise Keating. The book contained an anthology of essays that focused on different Anzaldúa concepts and theories from various authors. The final section of the book titled "el mundo zurdo, the new tribalism....forging new alliances," is where the focus on Anzaldúa appeared. However, only two articles from *EntreMundos/AmongWorlds* focused directly upon *El Mundo Zurdo*.

In Espinosa-Aguilar's "Radical Rhetoric: Anger, Activism, and Change," she argued how Anzaldúa implemented an angry rhetorical writing style in order to create inclusionary communities within *El Mundo Zurdo* to promote different modes of consciousness, or

³² Anzaldúa used spiritual activism to posit a metaphysical interconnection that also used non-binary modes of thinking to recognize the myriad difference amongst people while simultaneously using the similarities to enact social change (*The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, p. 320, 323)

³³ Henderson-Espinoza, "Gloria Anzaldúa's *El Mundo Zurdo*," 116.

conocimiento. For her, Anzaldúa envisioned “building bridges and coalitions of differing forces...where we can exist without subjection to societal vivisection.”³⁴ In this context, she argued that angry rhetoric was an aesthetic strategy to inspire activism by exposing injustice, stimulating moral outrage and creating a state of *nepantla* with possibilities that exist besides accepting hegemonic boundaries and towards a new consciousness instead.

The article contained statements of Anzaldúa’s critiques of white feminism and Chicano culture, but gave no historical background as to why Anzaldúa felt this way. This first happened with Espinoza-Aguilar noting Anzaldúa’s criticisms against her own Chicano culture with stating that they “den[y] the Black blood in our mesti[z]aje.”³⁵ This is significant in that Anzaldúa stated that her mother had black ancestry and the Chicano community in South Texas looked down their African ancestry.³⁶ In addition, Anzaldúa criticized Vasconcelos’ “La raza cosmica” because of its denial of “Black (and Asian blood) and heritages” in a 1995 interview.³⁷ From a historian’s perspective, one could ask where and when did she begin to recognize the African ancestry downplayed in her culture.³⁸ When did she begin to investigate the Chinese ancestry of Mexico, if at all?³⁹ Was it during her time in Texas? Indiana? San Francisco? Anzaldúa referenced writings from Third World women of both African-American and Asian-American descent in a writing called “Speaking in Tongues”, so the recognition of other oppressed people

³⁴ Espinoza-Aguilar, “Radical Rhetoric”, 228

³⁵ Espinoza-Aguilar, “Radical Rhetoric,” 231

³⁶ Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, ed. by AnaLouise Keating (New York, Routledge, 2000), 93

³⁷ Kakie Urch, Michael L. Dorn and J. Abraham, “Working the Borderlands, Becoming Mestiza: An Interview with Gloria Anzaldúa”, *disClosure*,: *A Journal of Social Theory* Vol. 4 (1995), 79

³⁸ Books that detail the history of Afro-Mexican culture (Afro-Mestizaje) and its prevalence in recent Mexican society include Anita Gonzalez’s *Afro-Mexico: Dancing between Myth and Reality* (University of Texas Press, 2010), Ben Vinson & Matthew Restall’s *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times* (University of New Mexico Press, 2009) and Marco Polo Hernandez Cuevas’ *African Mexicans and the Discourse on Modern Nation* (University Press of America, 2004).

³⁹ Articles and Books on the Chinese in Mexico include Evelyn Hu-DeHart’s “Racism and Anti-Chinese Persecution in Mexico,” Grace Delgado’s *Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Stanford University Press, 2013) and Robert Chao Romero’s *The Chinese in Mexico (1882-1940)* (University of Arizona Press, 2010).

in her life played a major role in shaping her theory.⁴⁰ Finding the instances where people of color directly influenced *El Mundo Zurdo* is paramount to understanding the theory.

Keating also referenced Anzaldúa's criticism of white (female) feminists by making them choose between "colored and female" and using "underground covert pressures."⁴¹ Where and when did she develop rifts with white feminists? Anzaldúa spoke of issues with pseudo-liberal feminists in the Feminist Writers Guild with her piece in *This Bridge* called "La Prieta" (the Dark One), but what more is there to that story?⁴² All of this is pertinent because she referenced feminists and women of color specifically in *El Mundo Zurdo*. I intend to, at the very least, make connections to people that may have influenced her prior to the publication of *This Bridge* in order to understand Anzaldúa's motivations for creating the theory.

The second essay, from AnaLouise Keating, was titled "Shifting Perspectives: Spiritual Activism, Social Transformation, and the Politics of Spirit." In the essay, Keating first acknowledged that academia typically overlooked the spiritual aspects of Anzaldúa's political ideology. She then focused on the more "conventionally political dimensions of her work" (e.g. geographical/metaphorical borders, Chicanas, lesbianism) due to academia and western biases toward rational thought, dualistic perspectives, and individualism that prevented full comprehension of Anzaldúa's theory. Keating wove in both Anzaldúa and her insights to explain the pragmatism and socio-justice aspects of spiritual activism by traveling the *El Mundo Zurdo* path, which was one "of a two-way movement— a going deep into the self and an expanding out

⁴⁰ "Speaking in Tongues" was originally a letter written to address Third World Writers that the Feminist Writers Guild published in their handbook titled *Words in Our Pockets* (Anzaldúa and Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 26-35.

⁴¹ Espinoza-Aguilar, "Radical Rhetoric", 231

⁴² "La Prieta" appeared in *This Bridge Called My Back*, which featured a subsection titled, "El Mundo Zurdo: the left-Handed World."

into the world, a simultaneous recreation of the self and a reconstruction of a society.”⁴³ Keating stressed that both she and Anzaldúa identified with groups of a two-way movement that did not limit themselves to extant classifications, such as ethnicity, gender, class, or nationality, while not discounting their significance at the same time. She defined this as the both-and perspective, which *El Mundo Zurdo* embodied.⁴⁴

Keating went into more detail with the history of *El Mundo Zurdo* in her article “I’m a citizen of the universe: Gloria Anzaldúa’s Spiritual Activism as Catalyst for Social Change.” She stressed how academics avoided Anzaldúa’s politics of spirit, the implicit biases within the western framework of spirituality writing, and distanced spiritual activism from “New Age” movements and conventional religions.⁴⁵ She referenced numerous writings from Anzaldúa in order to allude to a brief history of *El Mundo Zurdo* in which she stated Anzaldúa used it first as “El Mundo Surdo,” where she invited U.S. Third World writers, lesbians, and gay men to attend poetry readings during her time in San Francisco. In spite of their differences, according to Keating, they “shared several commonalities, including their so-called deviation from the dominant culture, their personal experiences of alienation/discrimination/oppression, interest in issues of social justice, rejection of the status quo, and work as creative artists.”⁴⁶

As previously stated, *El Mundo Zurdo* was previously a workshop that began in the late 1970s and early 80s in San Francisco titled “El Mundo Surdo,” and Keating touched on that idea before as an attempt to build alliances, connecting the “physical” *El Mundo Zurdo* in the “I’m a Citizen of the Universe” article. However, it was not extensive, considering her focus was on

⁴³ AnaLouise Keating, “Shifting Perspectives: Spiritual Activism, Social Transformation, and the Politics of Spirit,” in *EntreMundos/AmongWorlds: New Perspectives on Gloria Anzaldúa*, ed. by AnaLouise Keating (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 244.

⁴⁴ Keating, “Shifting Perspectives: Spiritual Activism, Social Transformation, and the Politics of Spirit,” 246.

⁴⁵ AnaLouise Keating, “I’m a Citizen of the Universe”: Gloria Anzaldúa’s Spiritual Activism as Catalyst for Social Change,” *Feminist Studies* 34, nos. 1/2, (2008), 53-58

⁴⁶ AnaLouise Keating, “I’m a Citizen of the Universe”, 63-64

Anzaldúa's theory applications, especially with the first article. The second article functions in the same manner excluding the brief mention of the history of *El Mundo Zurdo*. Furthermore, both articles involved a personal component, which makes sense considering Keating and Anzaldúa were close friends. To move away from this approach of analyzing Anzaldúa, I will write a biographical sketch of Anzaldúa that stresses important influences in her that created *El Mundo Zurdo* in order to make the argument that focusing on Anzaldúa can be done by focusing less on *Borderlands* and more on her life events in order to understand Anzaldúa the person. Instead of focusing on *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa's story up to the publication of *This Bridge* is more appropriate to accomplish this.

El Mundo Zurdo and Personal Influences on Anzaldúa

Childhood and Early Adulthood in Texas

As previously stated, I will write an *El Mundo Zurdo*-shaped biography by assessing her personal influences that led to its formation. This will be done chronologically in order to gain perspective as to how positive and negative influences shaped her life up to the period of *This Bridge Called My Back*. First, I will begin in Texas, then Indiana, return to Texas, and depart for California in the same manner that Anzaldúa did in her first forty years of her life.

As a child growing up in the Rio Grande Valley, Anzaldúa read many books. Anzaldúa stated that although she absorbed all the oral stories her grandparents told her, her infatuation with story-telling began when she wanted to become an artist. Her horse-sketching coincided with reading *Black Beauty* and after reading *Call of the Wild*, she became enamored with writing stories about dogs.⁴⁷ Her father encouraged her artistry, buying her a twenty-five cent pocket (Cowboy) Western book. She also read books as a reaction to the inadequate education that she

⁴⁷ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 22

received while in Hargill, Texas. To further counter subpar education she received at school, she went to the library and read everything she possibly could: dictionaries, encyclopedias, Aesop's Fables, and philosophy books.⁴⁸ Anzaldúa recollected that she was "this little kid that was carrying around Nietzsche and Kierkegaard."⁴⁹ In another instance, she recalled reading *Jane Eyre* and *Robinson Crusoe*, hiding the books behind her English book in class.⁵⁰ However, she had a hard time finding role models with whom she could personally identify, as most books constantly portrayed Mexicans and Native Americans in a negative light. A few exceptions were *Jane Eyre* and an Eskimo about which she read. She developed a particular attachment to the Eskimo because a doctor once said that she was a "throwback" to the people due to her frequent menstruating.⁵¹

Anzaldúa struggled with menstruating at a very early age, bleeding vaginally for the first time as a three-month old. She frequently found herself in wrenching pain with periods until she received a hysterectomy in 1980. Later in her life, she tied the idea to a spirit entering her body at three months old, exiting to her (brief) death and another spirit would enter into her body.⁵² The physical suffering that she endured growing up certainly identified her as an outcast, though she did not definitively identify as an outcast until adulthood. This unique experience gave her one of many identities for the *El Mundo Zurdo* theory decades later. Her father's purchase of the Western book and the Eskimo story were direct parts of the story, "La Prieta," in *This Bridge Called My Back*, which ended with the "El Mundo Zurdo: The Left-Handed World" section that

⁴⁸ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 25

⁴⁹ Ann E. Reuman, "Coming into Play: An Interview with Gloria Anzaldúa". *MELUS*, Vol. 25, No. 2, (2000), 31

⁵⁰ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 27

⁵¹ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 25

⁵² Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 34-35; This was one out of four death experiences she claimed to have had (up to 1982).

capped off all the different issues of identity crises and oppression within the story.⁵³ In addition, her positive influences were not limited to those generally classified as part of the Left-handed world.

While in elementary school, the only teachers of note that encouraged her were Mrs. Garrison and Mr. Leidner. While a student for Mr. Leidner, she assisted fellow Chicana students that needed help. However, some of her peers exploited the assistance by copying off of her papers, which Anzaldúa attributed to being too nice of a person.⁵⁴ By the time she was roughly 13 years old, she rejected “female role[s]” that her family subjected her to (e.g. cooking, cleaning, etc.) and decided to work with her mind.⁵⁵ During her time in high school, a white history teacher named Mr. Dugan became another influence outside of *El Mundo Zurdo*. Anzaldúa started reading history more frequently because of him. However, Mr. Dugan’s wife was an advanced English teacher who largely ignored her, as Anzaldúa was the only Chicana in the class. When Anzaldúa almost failed Mrs. Dugan’s class, she recognized her lack of privilege. She also realized how much harder she had to work in order to get ahead. To Anzaldúa, the white children in the class were “all brains.”⁵⁶ The discrimination she faced largely reflected the position of Chicanas in the 1940s and 50s in South Texas, which was similar to the experiences of African-Americans in the Jim Crow South. More importantly, whenever Anzaldúa gained inspiration from one of her teachers, she ran into conflict from either her Chicana peers or white superiors.

⁵³ Within the story, along with detailing her story about her childhood menstruation, she also detailed the shame she had of her mother, the internal struggles she dealt with within the Chicano movement in Texas and the gay rights and feminist movement in San Francisco, which led to the last title of the subsection: “El Mundo Zurdo: The Left-Handed World” in *This Bridge*. The final subsection of the entire book also titled as, “El Mundo Zurdo”.

⁵⁴ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 90-1

⁵⁵ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 86

⁵⁶ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 28

Anzaldúa also stated that Chicanxs growing up in the Happy Valley looked down on Mexicans due to the *mojado* (the Spanish equivalent to the derogatory term “wetback”) stigma attached to them.⁵⁷ Her family had to work with braceros in South Texas fields after gradually losing their land to white corporate owners, and Mexican-Americans in the Valley viewed working in the fields as a lowly occupation. The only job seen as lower than field work was migrant work, which Anzaldúa’s family had to eventually do for a time. Anzaldúa even missed a few months of school because of this. Anzaldúa also resented the work, though this had more to do with missing out on reading than class stigmas attached to the job. In addition, Anzaldúa seemed to be an exception to the resentment of Mexican braceros. As she worked out in the fields with them, she found them to be wonderful people.⁵⁸ Her early encounters with braceros helped to shape part of her later activism in both Texas and Indiana due to their stigmas as outcasts, with which she would later identify. Her positive interactions with the few teachers that showed her any encouragement helped solidify her decision to work with her mind instead of her hands. Her experiences would expand beyond race and class by the mid-1960s while attending Texas Woman’s University (TWU) in Denton, Texas.

When Anzaldúa left for TWU she began discovering and questioning her sexuality through the lives of others. She first encountered homosexual interactions when she stumbled

⁵⁷ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 42-3. During the 1940s and 1950s in Texas, the Mexican Farm Labor Program, also known as the “Bracero Program”, brought in large numbers of Mexican migrant workers to compensate for the loss of U.S. workers to the WWII effort. Though Texas was originally banned from taking in Braceros and Mexican domestic laborers and farm owners (among other groups) did not support the program due to potential job vacancies and Texan discrimination against Mexicans, it went through and Texans would eventually receive them. Issues involving undocumented immigration to Mexico following the Bracero Program’s enacting included the attempt of massive removal of undocumented immigrants known as “Operation Wetback” (Neil Foley, *Mexicans in the Making of America*, 2014, 79-83, 140). More books that specifically discuss the Bracero Program include Richard B. Craig’s *The Bracero Program: Interest Groups and Foreign Policy* (University of Texas Press, 1971), Kitty Calavita’s *Inside the State: The Bracero Program, Immigration, and the I.N.S* (Quid Pro Books, 1992, 2010) and Ronald L. Mize’s *The Invisible Workers of the U.S.—Mexico Bracero Program* (Lexington Press, 2016)

⁵⁸ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 87

across two women having sex in a bathroom while on her way to a friend's room. In response, she panicked and ran off. Anzaldúa identified this as the moment she realized she might be queer by going into denial and attempting to rationalize what she had seen. When she told her mother and sister about the experience, "they were horrified."⁵⁹ This is a first-hand account of a reaction of the Chicana culture's attitudes towards homosexuality outside of "La Prieta," which complements the larger framework of Chicana sexuality during this period.

Chicana lesbian writer Carla Trujillo once wrote that as Chicanas strived to reclaim their sexual selves, they had to confront lesbian Chicanas as "vendedoras (sellouts), blasphemers to the Church, atrocities against nature, or some combination."⁶⁰ Anzaldúa's family was irreligious outside of her parents being baptized as Catholics but almost never going to church or mass. Her grandmother was, in Anzaldúa's words "more pagan than Catholic."⁶¹ However, Anzaldúa's mother was raised "Spanish and very Mexican and very Indian," which she stated "always repressed women and sexuality."⁶² Even though Anzaldúa's family did not practice Catholicism, due to the religion's prominence in Chicana culture, it seems unlikely that stigmas coming from the religion had no influence to their negative reaction. Anzaldúa's confrontations with sexuality and homophobia would continue at TWU and beyond.

Further personal experiences, reflections, and conversations with relatives during her freshman year at TWU seemed to cause her to continue to question her own sexuality. Anzaldúa felt like she was nothing (as a person) because she almost never went out with men on Saturday nights. To further complicate issues, a man she occasionally went out with was sexually

⁵⁹ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 32

⁶⁰ Carla Trujillo, "Chicana Lesbians: Fear and Loathing in the Chicano Community" in *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*, ed. Alma M. Garcia (Routledge, 1991) 282. Carla Trujillo (b. 1957) is a Chicana feminist lesbian writer who currently works at the University of California Berkeley.

⁶¹ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 94-5

⁶² Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 94-5

interested in a close male friend of his. It was at this point that “the whole homosexuality thing happened...both in terms of discovering it existed and also that men [can be gay].”⁶³ After returning home from TWU, she discovered that a cousin was gay and an uncle was a “maricón.” The word “maricón” (the English equivalent of the pejorative “faggot”) was one that Herrera-Sobek mentioned in her article, which gives further evidence of the ways that homosexuals were ostracized in Chicana culture. In a 1982 interview, Anzaldúa went into detail about the various types of people categorized as “de los otros” (of the others). Some of the other names included (along with maricon/es) were lambicosos, mariposas (Mexican slang for faggot), marica (queer). The worst, according to Anzaldúa, was “culeros,” which refers “to dogs who lick other dogs in the ass and eat their shit.”⁶⁴ This highlights some of the Chicano jargon used to denote homosexuals as outcasts, which is especially important in that Anzaldúa would later identify with them. Homosexuals also formed part of *El Mundo Zurdo*, so these instances give strong suggestions of influencing Anzaldúa’s formation of the theory.

Anzaldúa was unfamiliar with homosexuality during her childhood in the Magic Valley, but the concept of “de los otros” was something she had seen. While growing up there, there was a woman that the townsfolk labeled “una de las otras” because she apparently spent half of the year having periods and the other half with a penis.⁶⁵ Some “de los otros” also included those

⁶³ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 33

⁶⁴ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 33. In the 1993 interview with Ann E. Reuman called “Coming Into Play”, she discussed other derogatory terms used in Chicana culture, mostly termed for lesbians including jotitas, jotas, and tortilleras. More of a general take of Chicana lesbianism appears in Immaculada Perpetusa-Seva’s and Lourdes Torres’ *Tortilleras: Hispanic & U.S. Latina Lesbian Expression* (Temple University Press, 2003), and Susana Chávez-Silverman and Librada Hernández’s *Reading and Writing the Ambiente: Queer Sexualities in Latino, Latin American, and Spanish Culture* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2000). Takes on Chicana sexuality appear in Alicia Gaspar de Alba’s *Velvet Barrios: Popular Culture and Chicana/o Sexualities* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), Aida Hurtado’s *Voicing Chicana Feminism: Young Women Speak Out on Sexuality and Identity* (NYU Press, 2003) and Debra J. Blake’s *Chicana Sexuality and Gender: Cultural Refiguring in Literature, Oral History, and Art* (Duke University Press, 2008)

⁶⁵ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 113

involved in incest, a topic which generally does not come to mind when discussing Anzaldúa and her theories. She discussed how after returning home from TWU and talking to her cousin on a regular basis, her cousin fell in love with her to the point that she told her sister to lie on her behalf as to why Anzaldúa did not want to speak. Another instance in which she spoke of incest is when she talked about a bisexual leaning cousin that had multiple affairs with a “prima hermana” (first cousin).⁶⁶ Anzaldúa herself even spoke of having these types of feelings toward her father. She transferred those feelings onto her brother because of the guilt stemming from it. However, she stressed that the father-daughter fantasies did not involve either her or her father’s face whenever she had them, that it could have been any other father-daughter combination. Anzaldúa did not limit having sexual fantasies with humans (e.g. brother-sister); she also envisioned them with other creatures (e.g. human-wolf).⁶⁷ Even in regards to Anzaldúa’s sexual fantasies, one can see that she did not limit boundaries to typical thoughts; rather, she experimented, which was what Anzaldúa continued to do in other aspects of her life with her theories, including *El Mundo Zurdo*.

Around the period she attended Pan-American University (PAU), Anzaldúa began immersing herself in Chicano culture. Her initial readings included works from Chicano activists such as ex-boxer Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales’ poem *Yo Soy Joaquin* and writings about Cesar Chavez, the activist that co-founded the United Farm Workers (UFW). Anzaldúa felt that Gonzales took “the Chicanos back to their roots” as they did not feel wanted by either whites or Mexicans. As a result, she revised her world perspective by reading Aztec, Maya, and Chicano literature. In addition to these readings, she joined MAYO. She later worked as a teacher’s aide at PAU as a full time student while working on the fields on the weekends before graduating

⁶⁶ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 33-4

⁶⁷ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 80

from PAU.⁶⁸ She continued working with the Chicano movement and migrants after taking a job as a teacher.

Anzaldúa heavily researched Chicana culture in order to teach their works and introduce other Chicana works in a classroom setting. During one of her courses, she worked with another teacher while they found works from a Chicano writer named Amado Muro, who wrote under the last name of his Chicana wife. She contacted him to ask if one of her students could perform his writings as a play, and he allowed it.⁶⁹ Anzaldúa working with colleagues and professional writers are exemplary early actions towards forming the “El Mundo Surdo” workshop over a decade later.

Some of her students were akin to “los otros,” if the original scope that defined homosexuals and transgenders in Chicano culture broadens in order to see its similarities to other marginalized groups like *El Mundo Zurdo*. At first, Anzaldúa’s superiors demeaned her by only allowing her to teach students with mental disabilities due to her Mexican ancestry. Eventually, she taught high school students to get away from some of the horrible stories that she had to hear about some of her students.⁷⁰ A number of the students she taught were also part of a vocational program specifically tailored for migrant Chicanos.⁷¹ She included texts from Muro and Gonzalez’s *Yo Soy Joaquin* in her curriculum; this subsequently inspired the students to write various stories about their personal lives. The principal of the school objected to this and even threatened to fire her at one point, but she persisted. A “rebel” professor named James Sledd also played a significant role for inspiring Anzaldúa while she took classes for her master’s in order

⁶⁸ “Spirituality, Sexuality, and the Body,” in Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* (Duke University Press, 2009), 81-2

⁶⁹ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 42-3

⁷⁰ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 43-4; Anzaldúa did manage to teach pre-school aged students for a year as well.

⁷¹ “Spirituality, Sexuality, and the Body,” 81

to further explore her roots and spirituality.⁷² These events show a mix of contemporary influences that helped shape Anzaldúa as a person and *El Mundo Zurdo* with her curriculum experimentations.

Other events that are associated with the late 1960s, such as the Vietnam War, began to directly affect Anzaldúa. In 1969, her brother returned from Vietnam suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and he could only tell her about some of the events that wrecked his psyche. Along with her farm work as a student at PAU, those two events shaped her involvement in the antiwar movement and the farm workers protests in the early 1970s. However, she soon grew disillusioned with MAYO because of the male dominance that pervaded the organization.⁷³ In “La Prieta,” she mentioned that the group fell apart after two members (including the president) admitted to being gay.⁷⁴ In addition, Anzaldúa attributed the MAYO disillusionment to her involvement in the farm worker movement. Aiding migrants ignited her desire to expand her perspectives of the world around her.⁷⁵ She said that she chose Indiana to work as an intermediary for migrant workers as a bilingual consultant. This included

⁷² “Spirituality, Sexuality, and the Body,” 82; Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 50. James Sledd (d.2003) was a professor Emeritus at the University of Texas-Austin, who according to Michael Erard, proclaimed himself to be the most hated man on [UT’s] campus due to “haranguing the department, the University, and every two years, the Texas State legislature on this erosion of service and the corruption of the academy.” To find out more about Sledd, read “What Would Jim Sledd Do? *Texas Observer*, Sept. 12, 2003, and “In Memoriam: James Sledd” by Beth Daniell (2003).

⁷³ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 44-5; Claire Joysmith, “Ya se me quito la vergüenza y la cobardía. Una plática con Gloria Anzaldúa,” *Debate Feminista*, Vol. 8 (Septiembre 1993), 7-8

⁷⁴ Anzaldúa, “La Prieta” in Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga’s *This Bridge Called My Back. Writings By Radical Women of Color*, (Latham NY, Kitchen Table Press, 2nd ed. 1983), 205

⁷⁵ The “Farm Worker Movement” in the region was led by Antonio Orendin (d. 2016) an activist who co-founded the UFW with Chavez and Huerta. He went back-and-forth from California and South Texas, and led a melon strike and march in the summer of 1966 in the Rio Grande Valley. He also created the Texas Farm Workers in 1975 in response to feeling distant from the wider UFW movement in California. For more information of the South Texas Farm Worker’s Movement, and on Orendin: Alan J. Watt’s *Farm Workers and the Churches: The Movement in California and Texas* (Texas A&M University Press, 2010) and Timothy Paul Bowman’s “What About Texas? The Forgotten Cause of Antonio Orendain and the Rio Grande Valley Farm Workers, 1966-1982” (2005).

getting more involved in Chicano and feminist movements.⁷⁶ Her experiences with migrant workers undoubtedly helped to fuel this decision as well.

Along with the combination of influences that led to *El Mundo Zurdo*, this period is the first instance in which studying Anzaldúa from a historical perspective can lead to potential avenues to other figures, such as Amado Muro, as little is known about Muro. Muro's real name was Chester Seltzer and he was white, not a Chicano who migrated west after WWII and whose stories gained little traction until the late 1960s when Chicano literature became noteworthy. His identity was not known until after his death, and not much information is known about him outside his son Robert Seltzer's autobiography detailing his relationship with his father's double-life in *Amado Muro and Me: A Tale of Honesty and Deception*. Considering that Anzaldúa used his works in the late 60s during the rise of popularity of Chicano literature, and anthologies of his works have been published, research that positions Seltzer in the wider Chicano movement in Texas can give the Chicano history and literature more depth.⁷⁷

Feminism and Writing Influences in *El Mundo Zurdo*:

Indiana

When Anzaldúa moved to Indiana, she worked more closely with farm workers and started calling herself a writer. She generated ideas in the state partially by returning to childhood interests, which included visiting libraries and creating art. Anzaldúa also tried sculpting and designing as hobbies.⁷⁸ She wanted to become an oil painter, but she did not because she lacked

⁷⁶ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 44-5; Joysmith, "Ya se me quito la vergüenza y la cobardía" 7-8

⁷⁷ *New York Times*, "The Pale Chicano," *New York Times*. May 30, 1982, Accessed November 23, 2016. There was even a period of time that to be that Seltzer was thought of as a promising young Chicano writer, when he actually died around 56 years of age. Other influences of Anzaldúa during this period included John Rechy, whom she mentioned in an interview with Hector A. Torres in *Conversations with Contemporary Chicana and Chicano Writers* (p. 124)

⁷⁸ Karen Ikas, *Chicana Ways: Conversations with Ten Chicana Writers*. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2002), 11.

the funds to acquire the necessary materials. She once said that writing was the better option because she felt that paper was practically free.⁷⁹

While working at a consultant firm, she wrote her first poem and novel by going to the local library. After reading Nahuatl poetry and Aztec history, she desired to become a “Tolteca,” which according to Anzaldúa, meant being an artist within all realms.⁸⁰ Other writings ranged from poems about her readings into Aztec culture (e.g. an obsidian sacrificial knife) to a song about her life experiences in Indiana (“The City Circuit Song”). She later connected the writings with the poem “Hummingbird”, which for Anzaldúa consisted of being an Azteca that was a “woman of two cultures...on this fence and putting roots into both the white culture—not only the white Spanish culture but the white Anglo I grew up with—also into the *india*.”⁸¹ She began practicing the occult in this period, which influenced her writings as well. A psychic medium named Jane Roberts and a book she wrote called *Seth Speaks*, also influenced Anzaldúa during this time.⁸²

She also met an important figure within the Chicana movement in Indiana while taking a philosophy class: professor and activist Julian (Julio) Samora. She also met his wife, Betty, who headed the Headstart program of which Anzaldúa took part.⁸³ Along with this, she worked as a bilingual consultant and for the Indiana state department as a director of liaison for the migrant

⁷⁹ Joysmith, “Ya se me quito la vergüenza y la cobardía, 8

⁸⁰ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 49

⁸¹ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 49

⁸² Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 49; Jane Roberts (d. 1984) was an American author and poet, and psychic medium whose collections of works on Seth is known as *The Seth Material*.

⁸³ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 49; “Julian Samora,” Institute for Latino Studies - University of Notre Dame. Last modified 2017. Accessed, February 10, 2017. Julian Samora (d. 1996) was a Chicano scholar, writer, and activist who helped found the Southwest Council of La Raza (which later became the National Council of La Raza), the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), and the Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project (SWVREP). He also served as a pioneer in Latino Studies by founding the Mexican American Graduate Studies Program at Notre Dame and authored several books, among them *A History of the Mexican American People* (1977).

workers.⁸⁴ Part of the difference between Indiana and Texas for Anzaldúa's activism was that she had more freedom in the former. She once stated that she got a hint of feminism while working at the consulting firm, though she does not specify as to how other than being a bilingual consultant. This presumably could have meant just being around many women.⁸⁵ However, this possibly ties in to the successes of Chicanas up to this time.

By this period, Chicana women had already pressed for rights within the wider Chicano rights movement, which included criticizing their traditional roles as cooks, caretakers, and secretaries (among other positions). By 1974, Chicanas had organized several groups nationwide, such as the Comision Feminil Mexicana (Mexican Women's Commission), the First National Conference of Chicanas, and the Mexican-American Women's National Association (MANA).⁸⁶ Anzaldúa not confined to a stereotypical office job such as a secretary was a sign of progress, and could mean that her feminism came from being a Chicana leader who gathered and taught other women. She would not stay in Indiana for long, however. Another part of the difference in Anzaldúa's activism in Indiana and Texas is the loneliness felt in the former. Anzaldúa felt isolated while in Indiana. She had few acquaintances, no lovers, and her itinerant work took a

⁸⁴ In Indiana, the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) and the United Farm Workers (UFW) inspired the migrant worker movement in the region. However, the local group that took action in Indiana was the Farm Labor Aid Committee (FLAC) and local Catholics. For more information, read Dustin McLochlin's "American Catholicism and Farm Labor Activism: The Farm Labor Aid Committee in Indiana as a Case Study" and district court case *Franceschina v. Morgan*, (S.D. Ind. 1972).

⁸⁵ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 45

⁸⁶ Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Women's Movement Changed America* (Penguin, 2000), 285-91. The Mexican Women's Commission was formed in 1970 in response to the male domination of the Chicano movement and the non-inclusion and racism of the feminist movement, led by Francisca Flores and Simmie Romero. (Vicki L. Ruiz and Virginia Sanchez Korrol, *Latinas in the United States: A Historical Encyclopedia* (Indiana University Press, 2006), 167). The First National Conference of Chicanas took place in 1971 in response to the perceived failures of the National Chicano Youth Conference in Denver in 1969 for Chicana liberation. Among the issues discussed at the First National Conference was legal abortion, birth control, and not being scapegoats for men's frustration. (Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 288-89). The Mexican-American Women's National Association formed in 1974 by a number of Mexican-American women in the Washington, D.C. area to help create an environment that could foster teaching and organizing that could include Mexican American women from all socioeconomic backgrounds. (Ruiz and Korrol, *Latinas in the United States*, 458-9).

toll on her well-being.⁸⁷ She left the job and returned to Texas to work on her doctorate at the University of Texas in Austin (UTA).

From Anzaldúa's Indiana experience, one can gather how she attempted to obtain the experience needed to formulate *El Mundo Zurdo*. She still maintained her relationship with the migrant workers, began her writing career, and continued branching out to other people by recognizing her multiple identities. Also, historians (in particular Chicana historians) can further gauge the influence of Julian Samora within the Chicano movement in Indiana and the Midwest who had contacts with important Chicana figures such as Anzaldúa.

Return to Texas (Austin)

While earning her Ph.D. in Austin, she primarily read white feminist writings. Among these were works by Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millet, Judy Grahn, and Robin Morgan.⁸⁸ She continued obtaining inspiration from Chicano writers, like Alurista, by going to some his events.⁸⁹ However, she generally had issues with teachers, none of whom was women, during her time at UTA. One of her teachers was author Michael Mewshaw.⁹⁰ She stated that he was "very sexist, racist, homophobic, didn't like science fiction or anything like that," but nevertheless "got some technique from him." She did an independent study with him and received A's, attributing her success with Mewshaw to her inner Libra.⁹¹ However, James Sledd continued pushing

⁸⁷ "Spirituality, Sexuality, and the Body," 83.

⁸⁸ Simone de Beauvoir (d. 1989) was a French existentialist feminist writer most known for the book *The Second Sex*. Kate Millet (b. 1934) is an American feminist writer best known for her book *Sexual Politics*. Judy Grahn (b. 1940) is an American feminist lesbian poet whose works led to the Judy Grahn Award, an accolade given to works that best detail the gay and lesbian experience, in her honor. Robin Morgan (b. 1941) is an American writer, lecturer and activist known for her edited anthology of radical feminist writings known as *Sisterhood is Powerful*.

⁸⁹ Alurista (b. 1947) is a Chicano poet and activist who was one of the first poets to blend both Spanish and English into his writings, such as *Et Tu...Raza?* ("Alurista", Poetry Foundation, Accessed February 12, 2017, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/alurista>).

⁹⁰ Michael Mewshaw (b. 1943) is an American author who has written fiction and nonfiction such as travel narratives and a former director of the Creative Writing Program at University of Texas-Austin.

⁹¹ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 50

Anzaldúa to write about her influences, and she credited the time spent in his classes as the beginning of articulating *El Mundo Zurdo* as a concept.⁹²

Anzaldúa's most important feminist influence was her friend Randy Connor, a gay white man who also appeared in "La Prieta." Anzaldúa stated that he invited her to a lesbian meeting at a WomanSpace which consisted of a reading group.⁹³ While attending these meetings, Connor introduced her to books from feminist writers such as Shulamith Firestone and Pierre Louÿs.⁹⁴ She also credited him for pointing out the connection between homosexuality, lesbianism, and feminism. What partially drew her into white feminism was that the Chicana feminism she experienced in-person up to that point was all straight, and the lesbian feminist aspects she encountered first happened in white feminist groups like WomanSpace. The women there also gave her the language needed in order to articulate feminist ideas attained while working with migrants. From there, she began to develop her own ideas with her own cultural words and symbols and images.⁹⁵ This included using words like "patlache" (of Nahuatl origin) to signify being a "dyke" or "lesbian" from a Chicana perspective, as lesbian felt too Eurocentric for an

⁹² Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 51; James Sledd (d.2003) was a professor Emeritus at the University of Texas-Austin, who according to Michael Erard, proclaimed himself to be the most hated man on [UTA's] campus due to "haranguing the department, the University, and every two years, the Texas State legislature on this erosion of service and the corruption of the academy." To find out more about Sledd, read "What Would Jim Sledd Do? *Texas Observer*, Sept. 12, 2003, and "In Memoriam: James Sledd" by Beth Daniell (2003).

⁹³ There are several groups known as WomanSpace; however, only two qualify as potential places which Anzaldúa frequented with location in consideration. A WomanSpace resource center was founded in Cleveland by women such as Del Jones (b. 1926), a community organizer in the Civil Rights Movement, a VP of the National Organization of Women (NOW), and founded the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center prior to the WomanSpace (Barbara J. Love, *Feminists Who Changed America*, University of Illinois Press, 2006) The other WomanSpace of note was founded in 1977 as a non-profit organization after the Mercer County (New Jersey) Commission on the Status of Women in 1976 held public meetings to discuss domestic violence issues. Following the organizing of the New Jersey Coalition for Battered Women, future mayor of Princeton Barbara Sigmund (d.1990), among other women, signed the WomanSpace certificate of incorporation for it to exist as a private, non-profit organization ("Mission, History, Timeline," WomanSpace, accessed March 13, 2017, <https://womanspace.org/about-womanspace/mission-history-timeline/>). Nothing is known as to whether or not a branch opened in Texas, and this may have occurred while she still lived in the Midwest, though this is not certain.

⁹⁴ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 45-46; Shulamith Firestone (d .2012) was a Canadian-American radical feminist writer best known for *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*. Pierre Louÿs (d. 1925) was a French poet and writer that wrote erotic themes which included lesbianism.

⁹⁵ Reuman, "Coming into Play," 39

accurate self-description.⁹⁶ She also started associating with mostly non-cisgender Chicanxs during this period, many of whom she met through Conner. By this time, she identified as a lesbian and developed a higher consciousness for Chicana oppression. This allowed Anzaldúa “to be Chicana, to be queer, to be spiritual.”⁹⁷ This instance seems to be the first in which she began to mold multiple identities that fell more into line with *El Mundo Zurdo*.

She also discovered her multiple identities on a spiritual level. After wanting to reveal answers about her inner self, she went on a “mushroom trip” in 1975. In addition to heavy influences from cubism, surrealism, “magico realism,” and the heritage of her last name, the ideas combined as one of her earlier theories known as the “Gloria Multiplex.” This theory was largely inspired from reading James Hillman’s *Revisioning Psychology*.⁹⁸ Anzaldúa appropriated Hillman’s “Gloria Duplex” for her multiple selves as the “Gloria Multiplex” and applied what she learnt from the WomanSpace feminists to articulate her personal experiences to become another stepping stone in the development *El Mundo Zurdo*. However, the full realization of the “Gloria Multiplex” did not occur until she moved to California.

Although inspired by her time in Indiana and her early childhood, she did start putting those ideas together until she started teaching at UTA. Moreover, the earlier experiences with curriculum experimentation in the late 1960s and early 1970s were what aided her. She taught a course called “The Mujer Chicana” and experimented with the curriculum by adding a homosexual element to it. At this point, rudimentary ideas for *This Bridge Called My Back* began

⁹⁶ Reuman, “Coming Into Play,” 36

⁹⁷ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 54

⁹⁸ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 36-7; James Hillman (d. 2011) was an American psychologist who came up with the term “Gloria Duplex” after studying the Renaissance concepts of the *anima* (soul) to articulate the capacity to have “more than one standpoint, seeing behind, seeing through, and hearing the many voices of the soul” (Ricardo F. Vivancos Pérez, *Radical Chicana Poetics*, Springer Press 25). Magical Realism (magico realismo) is a literary genre based in Latin American culture that authors such as Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel Marcia Marquez, and Julio Cortazar pioneered, which consisted of “narrative fiction that incorporates mythical and fantastic elements into what would otherwise be considered realistic fiction” (Merriam-Webster).

surfacing.⁹⁹ However, Anzaldúa did not finish her doctorate program at UTA due to facing more discrimination. An advisor told her that she could not focus her writings on either Chicana literature or women's studies. Therefore, in spite of her progress, she still faced too many roadblocks to have any success and left for California in 1977.¹⁰⁰

Back in Texas, the people Anzaldúa met inspired her writings and teachings. Her associations with the LGBT community, interactions with professors at UTA, and with white feminism shaped her own ideologies and gave her the background that she needed when she left for San Francisco to add to the burgeoning concept of *El Mundo Zurdo*.

California

When Anzaldúa moved to San Francisco, she began pursuing a full-time writing career. Among the first things that she did was move into a commune with fifteen people from different backgrounds: a black man, a Chinese man, two white lesbians, two bisexuals, and two gay men. Though a seemingly meaningless factoid, it was significant in that Anzaldúa eventually met many more people considered part of *El Mundo Zurdo*, especially women of color who identified as lesbian. She also attended more workshops that the gay community introduced to her and participated in women-led organizations, such as the Women's Writers' Union, where she met activist/writers such as Merle Woo, Nellie Wong, and Susan Griffin, among others.¹⁰¹ She also took part in the Feminist Writer's Guild and later became a member of the Guild's National

⁹⁹ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 54-5. During this time, she also immersed herself in surrealism, avant-garde literature, and Spanish, from writers such as Julio Cortazar, Jorge Luis Borges, Federico Garcia Lorca, and Gabriella Mistral.

¹⁰⁰ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 237; Karen Ika, *Chicana Ways*, 4

¹⁰¹ Merle Woo (b. 1941) and Nellie Wong (b. 1934) are Asian-American writers and activists who both appeared in *This Bridge Called my Back*; Susan Griffin (b. 1943) is an eco-feminist author known for *Woman and Nature: the Roaring Inside Her* (1978) and co-writing and narrating the documentary *Berkeley in the Sixties* (1990). The Women Writer's Union was founded in the early 1970s by former American ballet dancer and Karen Brodine (d.1987) who taught at San Francisco State University and worked in the typesetting trade while operating the organization (Nicole Coles and Peter Oresick's *For a Living: The Poetry of Work*, University of Illinois Press, 1995, 377). Anzaldúa also met her during her time in San Francisco (Ika, *Chicana Ways*, 4).

Steering Committee in 1978.¹⁰² It was at this point that Anzaldúa ran into conflict with white feminists within the organization. According to her, she and Cherrie Moraga were the only Third World Women of the organization for a lengthy period, and they felt silenced. Anzaldúa stated that “they were interested in our being third world, but they weren’t interested in anything about the oppression [we faced], or in being asked, ‘When are you going to deal with your racist shit?’”¹⁰³

This ran counter to the Guild’s public image. For example, in the November 1977 issue of *Mother Jones*, the Guild had a promotion ad in which they discussed objectives to fight against suppression of lesbian writings. The Guild wanted the inclusion of more feminist writings from white and Third World women. In fact, the organization had recently called off a boycott of *Mother Jones* due to the magazine not publishing feminist writings. Part of the stipulations of presenting the Guild’s advertisements included more writings and articles from Third World women. Even the photo collage of supporters seemed to run counter to their treatment of non-whites if Anzaldúa’s statements are true, as June Jordan (a black American writer of Jamaican descent) appeared as one of the six photographed sponsors of the organization.¹⁰⁴

Anzaldúa also once said that whenever she spoke at the Guild meetings, the other women interrupted her, or if she did finish, the other women interpreted her words through their own perspectives.¹⁰⁵ Moraga was more inclined to speak out against these actions due to “recently beginning to identify as third world [and] Chicana,” according to Anzaldúa.¹⁰⁶ Anzaldúa also

¹⁰² Anzaldúa and Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 326

¹⁰³ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 57

¹⁰⁴ Susan Griffin and Mary Mackey, “Feminist Writers,” *Mother Jones*, November 1977 p. 4; Mary Mackey and Valerie Miner, “Feminist Writers Unite,” *Mother Jones*, November 1977, p. 8

¹⁰⁵ Karen Ikas, *Chicana Ways*, 5

¹⁰⁶ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 57-8.

dealt with racism while attending a conference hosted by Merlin Stone in 1978. Stone invited her via scholarships to an expensive retreat, where the retreat owners segregated her from the other eleven members into a room with just a collective bunk-bed. Anzaldúa received more racist treatment once the owners of the retreat found out that she did not pay with her own money to attend. These actions disturbed both Anzaldúa and Stone, and as a result Stone was the first person to encourage Anzaldúa to compile *This Bridge*.¹⁰⁷

Ultimately, the longer Anzaldúa and Moraga worked with the group, the more the two faced more marginalization with the Guild becoming more conservative, upper-middle class, and heterosexual. They left the organization after finishing their respective terms as members.¹⁰⁸ This strongly suggests that the negative treatment they experienced as members of the Guild reinforced the treatment of those described in Anzaldúa's *El Mundo Zurdo*, and showed how influential Stone and Moraga were in the process during their time at the Guild. These two people were not the only influences, however.

Anzaldúa met a black woman during one of the meetings named Luisah Teish.¹⁰⁹ She was a significant influence on Anzaldúa during her time in San Francisco. During this period, she received psychic readings from Teish about Anzaldúa's theories of her childhood menstruations. Anzaldúa also received readings from Teish stating that she had Yoruban goddesses Oya and Yemoja as mothers.¹¹⁰ Most importantly, Anzaldúa conducted an interview

¹⁰⁷ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 153

¹⁰⁸ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 58

¹⁰⁹ Ika, *Chicana Ways*, 5. The original title of the anthology was *Radical Third World Feminists Anthology* (as appears in Deborah Goldman Wolf's *The Lesbian Community: With an Afterword*, 1980), and then later changed to *A Woman to Woman Dialogue: A Radical Third World Women's Anthology* (Anzaldúa, Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 326). There is more detail about the letter's impact from a Moraga perspective in *The Un/Making of Latina/o Citizenship: Culture, Politics, and Aesthetics*, edited by Ellie D. Hernandez and Eliza Rodriguez y Gibson (2014, Palgrave Macmillan).

¹¹⁰ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 19. Aurora Levins Morales, a Puerto Rican writer, also conducted readings on Anzaldúa that would influence her to conduct herself in the "manner of a shaman", according to Anzaldúa. Morales also ended up being one of the writers included in *This Bridge*.

with Teish in 1980 that would eventually appear in *This Bridge* over the topics of goddesses, numerology, and potions, etc. Anzaldúa and Teish interpreted those topics with women's empowerment and the struggle against men who fought against those ideas. Anzaldúa linked this conversation to *El Mundo Zurdo*: "Si, I see it in terms of the left-handed world coming into being. For centuries now...women were struck with having powers of intuition experiencing other levels of reality...yet they had to sit on it because men would say, well, you're crazy."¹¹¹ Anzaldúa's connection to Teish harkened to her days in Indiana researching indigenous culture to which she felt attached (i.e. the Nahuatl poetry and Aztec literature). She found a kindred spirit in Teish, who also embraced a heritage that was somewhat distant to her, and undoubtedly served as a major influence for Anzaldúa. This may also be the point where she discovered the African ancestry of the *mestizaje*, though she never specified.

Anzaldúa also received medical attention for her early menstruation struggles during this period. Within a two-year period, she visited six gynecologists and they wanted Anzaldúa to get a hysterectomy due to her enlarged ovaries and cervix opening. Though this seems to be irrelevant to her time in San Francisco, it is actually quite the opposite, as she claims that she had repressed the pains to where she could not detect whenever her body was in pain or ill.¹¹² She had to deal with the external and internal pains that wrecked her psyche, which led to the realization of the "Gloria Multiplex.

In the process of developing the "Gloria Multiplex," she noticed a tendency to reject less-than-favorable aspects of herself. Part of this came from the internalized shame that stemmed from the childhood menstruation. The subsequent ostracizing her mother received because she allowed Anzaldúa to dress in clothes that exposed her body as a child contributed to her self-

¹¹¹ Anzaldúa and Moraga. *This Bridge Called My Back*, 223

¹¹² Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 93

rejection as well. Anzaldúa felt no shame dressing in shorts and bathing suits that showed her pubic hair, but her mother eventually did. However, she later in life internalized the guilt of her body and odors during her periods due to pressure from the Chicano culture and the woman figures in her life (i.e. mother and grandmother) because they reinforced that guilt. She often went out to a shed to wash her bloody cloths and hung them on low cactus branches in order to prevent anyone from spotting them.¹¹³ Anzaldúa spoke more of this in “La Prieta.” Her mother tied a rag to her panties, telling her to keep her legs shut, and wrapped Anzaldúa’s breasts in girdles as a seven year old because of her precocious puberty.¹¹⁴ Anzaldúa ultimately blamed her shame on men (Chicano more than likely) whom, she argued, thrust feelings of dirtiness onto her, and she soon discovered after her hysterectomy in 1980 that the true dirtiness came from both the shame and hatred of her body.¹¹⁵

Anzaldúa felt as if there were two people inside of her, one side telling her that her uninhibited feelings about her body were “evil” and she was “dirty,” the other side telling her “No, that’s their perception.”¹¹⁶ However, she did fault herself for causing the spiritual imbalance. Yet she stressed that it was her total self that caused this struggle, not the “evil Gloria,” which she attributed partially to her mother and sister referring to it as Anzaldúa’s “selfishness.” However, once she realized that her selfishness was a part of herself, the guilt (which stemmed from her body issues) dwelling inside had split and the evil subsided.¹¹⁷

Anzaldúa’s struggles with her body tied into the larger issue within Chicana sexual awareness, or lack thereof. Chicana lesbian writer Carla Trujillo spoke of a study on the

¹¹³ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas* 92

¹¹⁴ Anzaldúa and Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 39

¹¹⁵ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 93

¹¹⁶ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 94

¹¹⁷ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 94

sexuality of 373 Latina immigrants in which over half of the participants knew little about their reproductive systems. For Trujillo, this pointed to a larger issue of how Chicanos affected the self-perception of Chicanas as sexual beings by reinforcing a taboo of participation and satisfaction with sex.¹¹⁸ Considering Anzaldúa's precocious puberty issues along with a lack of sexual awareness with Chicana culture, this could tie in the earlier stories of Anzaldúa attempting to find her own sexuality that culminated in this struggle. Anzaldúa did pull from influences outside of her culture as well.

The 1979 film *Alien* also inspired Anzaldúa to come to terms with the “fucked-up” and “loving” Glorias. However, she did not want to sever the two. She took note of projections of fear and hatred in the film and compared these to her contemporary scapegoats such as the “faggots, lesbians, and third-world people” to realize all aspects of her Multiplex that “saved [her] sanity”.¹¹⁹ By doing this, she used her personal struggles to identify with the larger struggle of people who shared commonalities within *El Mundo Zurdo*.

In February 1979, Anzaldúa attended a Merlin Stone workshop that inspired her to write a soliciting letter for *This Bridge*.¹²⁰ She then corresponded with Stone, Randy Conner, and Moraga. According to Anzaldúa, though the idea for *This Bridge* came sooner, it did not “gel” until meeting with Stone, who gave her the encouragement that she needed to pursue the anthology. From there, she asked Moraga to be co-editor. The pair sent a letter soliciting contributions to various women's organizations, women's studies programs, and Third World

¹¹⁸ Trujillo, “Chicana Lesbians” 282

¹¹⁹ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 40-1, Anzaldúa also referred to people from other planets, androids, and test-tube people born in the future as the “other”.

¹²⁰ Merlin Stone (d. 2011) was an American art sculptor, professor, and author best known for her feminist work *When God Was a Woman*, written in 1976.

studies organizations in the United States. The Feminist Writers Guild did support the effort, as it appeared in their newsletter.¹²¹

Furthermore, 1979 was the year in which Anzaldúa began conducting the “El Mundo Surdo” reading series. This occurred after meeting Robert (Bob) Glück while going to Small Press Traffic, a workshop in San Francisco in August of that year.¹²² Robert Glück is a gay writer who co-directed the Small Press Traffic bookstore in the late 1970s and early 1980s and hosted free-writing workshops for the New Narrative movement of writing. Anzaldúa was one of many gay and lesbian people that he met through the workshop in this period.¹²³ Part of what influenced his creation of the movement was the search to convey the meaning of the gay man experience while subverting and exploring new meanings of said experiences.¹²⁴ Considering that Anzaldúa was in the process of conveying her experiences as a lesbian/patlache Chicana at this time, it would not be a surprise if the two influenced each other, in particular Anzaldúa’s “El Mundo Surdo” workshop. However, it is possible that the focus for Glück’s later organization, Left Writers Union, which focused exclusively on gay and feminist issues, could have been inspired from contacting feminists like Anzaldúa.

By October, the series had officially commenced, and the readers at the series included Anzaldúa, Moraga, Teish, and Mary Hope Whitehead Lee, the latter of whom also appeared in

¹²¹ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 58-9. The original title of the anthology was *Radical Third World Feminists Anthology* (as appears in Deborah Goldman Wolf’s *The Lesbian Community: With an Afterword*, 1980), and then later changed to *A Woman to Woman Dialogue: A Radical Third World Women’s Anthology* (Anzaldúa, Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 326). There is more detail about the letter’s impact from a Moraga perspective in *The Un/Making of Latina/o Citizenship: Culture, Politics, and Aesthetics*, edited by Ellie D. Hernandez and Eliza Rodriguez y Gibson.

¹²² Robert Glück (b. 1947) is a writer who co-founded the New Narrative Movement in San Francisco in the 1980s, which consisted of “L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E theory with queer, feminist, and class-based discourse while exploring issues of autobiography and self”; “Robert Glück”, Poetry Foundation, Accessed February 10, 2017.

¹²³ Robert Glück, *Communal Nude: Collective Essays* (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2016), 21-2

¹²⁴ Robert Glück, “Writing Must Explore its Relation to Power,” *LitHub*, June 27th, 2016. Accessed February 11, 2017, <http://lithub.com/writing-must-explore-its-relation-to-power/>

This Bridge. By the summer of 1980, “El Mundo Surdo” also became the name of the writing workshop she co-led with Moraga. After conducting more interviews and working alongside other writers, such as Beverly and Barbara Smith and Anita Valerio, she completed the manuscript for *This Bridge* in October of the same year. In May 1981, Anzaldúa left San Francisco to live on the East Coast. After attending and participating in several workshops and panels and changing publishers, *This Bridge* finally reached publication in 1983.¹²⁵

These alliances forged in San Francisco culminated in the experiences that led to its publication. Anzaldúa accomplished this by applying her life experiences and the life experiences of others of *El Mundo Zurdo* into the book. Through outlining the different people that influenced her, one can see how and why she came to formulate *El Mundo Zurdo* as a theory. One can also research more historically by focusing on the various people that influenced her, from more recognizable figures such as Merlin Stone to some figures who have little research about their stories, such as Teish and Lee. Those studying the gay rights and feminist movements also have avenues from which to see conflicts with organizations such as the Feminists Writers Guild in San Francisco.

However, there are aspects of her life that I could not assess fully due to the lack of information my sources provided. From the interviews listed, she did not mention any straight white males (or any straight males) of note that influenced her in person during her time in San Francisco from the interviews from which I gathered information. This is significant because she desired to publish *This Bridge* with a small-time publishing house that did not discriminate in publishing, not only third-world women and gays and lesbians, but white males who shared their

¹²⁵ Anzaldúa and Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 327-9. One of the workshops that she attended was based in Chicago named El Mundo Zurdo: Political and Spiritual Vision for the Third World and Queer in 1982, along with leading a “The Politics of Literature” workshop at Yale University called Third World Woman’s Conference: El Mundo Zurdo in 1983. Anzaldúa also switched from Persephone to Kitchen Table Press during this time.

sentiments.¹²⁶ In the “El Mundo Zurdo (the Left-handed World)” piece, she also included “feminist-oriented men” as part of the “banding and bonding together” of people from different backgrounds.¹²⁷ In addition, Anzaldúa corresponded with other people during this period that she did not discuss in much detail from the interviews from where I gathered this information, such as Mirtha Quintanales and Adrienne Rich.¹²⁸ Anzaldúa did not go into much detail as to the feminist influences in Indiana either, and I could not draw concrete evidence that she became aware of the Chinese ancestry of Mexico during her time in San Francisco where she encountered more people of Chinese descent. She did not mention any specific Chicanos that she had direct conflicts with in those interviews either. There also was not a direct link between Anzaldúa starting to recognize the Afro-mestizaje heritage of Mexican culture or any instance of women directly being involved the farm worker’s movement in South Texas. Nevertheless, my paper provides the historical approach that covers some sections of Anzaldúa’s life that have been little discussed up to this point, gives further background to the articles that writers such as Keating have written, and compliments articles that lacked the information due to the approaches that they took by discussing the figures she mentioned in her interviews and literature.

¹²⁶ Anzaldúa, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 63.

¹²⁷ Gloria Anzaldúa, “El Mundo Zurdo (the Left-handed World)” in Anzaldúa and Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 50.

¹²⁸ Mirtha Quintanales is an American feminist ethnic studies professor that teaches at New Jersey City University; Adrienne Rich (d. 2012) was a Jewish-American poet, essayist, and lesbian feminist who became a notable writer after her poetry collection called *Diving into the Wreck* (1973) earned her the National Book Award the following year (Poets.org. “Adrienne Rich,” Accessed February 19, 2017, <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/adrienne-rich> ; Margalit Fox. “Adrienne Rich, Influential Feminist Poet, Dies at 82”, *New York Times*, March 28, 2012, Accessed February 19, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/29/books/adrienne-rich-feminist-poet-and-author-dies-at-82.html>

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