

**Reclaiming perceptions of *Mestiza* Spirituality through
Dance, Storytelling and Poetry**



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For video of performance, check out www.peacefulchicana.com

Abstract

Reclaiming perceptions of Mestiza Spirituality is a two-part project. First it is an inter-disciplinary theoretical analysis of the roles that La Malinche, Sor Juana Ines De La Cruz and Gloria Anzaldua played in their symbolic historical location. Despite the economic and religious barriers for social mobility, they were able to thrive and transcend expectations of women. Secondly it is a multi-medium performance piece incorporating dance, storytelling, and poetry to bring to life these three women with a focus on their relationships to their spirituality. There are two main purposes of this capstone, 1) to provide a theoretical analysis of the ways in which they challenged the dominant social and gendering practices and norms during their time periods, 2) to explore the role of performance in reaching a wider audience to comprehend the historical genealogy of these mestiza women and to redefine our perceptions of the role of mestiza spirituality in history. They have played instrumental roles in challenging their oppressive dominant cultures.

Introduction

According to Mexican folklore, there are three types of death of an individual. The first is the death we are all familiar with, the death of the physical body. The second death occurs when all of your loved ones, and everyone who ever knew you, all pass away. The third type of death happens when all memories of you cease to exist. The third death may be delayed through art, history and storytelling. In this project, I aim to contribute to the collective memory of three inspiring mestiza women in hopes of extending their lives and memory: Malinche, Sor Juana Ines De La Cruz, and Gloria

Anzaldua. All three of these women have strong spiritual connections to both pre-colonial spirituality and Catholicism. While each of their stories is entirely unique, this connection to their spirituality, gave all three of them the strength to survive in the minds and hearts of future generations.

The aim of this paper is to explore the roles that Malinche, Sor Juana Ines De La Cruz, and Gloria Anzaldua played in their symbolic historical location as influential indigenous/mestiza/Chicana¹ women who challenged the social and gendering practices and norms during their historical time periods and how they have been remembered in popular collective memory. Despite the social, economic, and religious barriers for social and educational mobility, these women were able to thrive and transcend expectations of the role of a woman using their spiritual connections to Catholicism and pre-colonial Aztec/indigenous spirituality. Even in contemporary times, Chicana and mestiza women face a hostile environment, which limits their choices and educational mobility, but they have far more stories of success and role models from which to draw to help them transcend limited expectations.

The three *mestiza* women whose stories I will explore, Malinche, Sor Juana Ines De La Cruz, and Gloria Anzaldua, survived and thrived using their spiritual connections to Christianity. For example, Malinche was among the first indigenous women to be baptized into the Catholic religion by Spanish colonizers in the 1520's, enabling her to survive the conquest. Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz chose to become a Catholic nun so that she would be free to develop her intellectual pursuits, and thus she would survive as an intellectual. Gloria Anzaldua is a Chicana poet and author who combined pre colonial

¹ Mestiza is the cultural symbiosis between the European Spanish and the indigenous people to create a "mixed people". Chicana represents politicized Mexican-American women born in the US.

and post-colonial spirituality with politics and poetry to tie together overlapping struggles, such as the Chicano movement with queer liberation. These women talked back and questioned authority to the extent that they could, they did not accept their lot in life, and they did not accept their gender or racial roles. One purpose of this project is to provide a theoretical analysis of the ways in which these strong women have resisted dominant social roles, while exploring the role of performance in bringing this theory and these women into the hearts and minds of a wider audience.

Contemporary literature by Gloria Anzaldua, Ana Castillo, and Cherrie Morraga suggests that contemporary Chicano communities reclaim pre-colonial spirituality, despite their ancestor's strong ties to Catholicism. As a Chicana feminist, I will be exploring this tension through performance art. The main purpose of the performance is to enable students to find inspiration from the stories of three women who have been left out of mainstream history books. I am primarily concerned with how traditional Spanish values such as virginity and male dominance within Mexican and Chicano communities permeate the views of these women. I will also focus on how these values have made it difficult to truthfully address gender and social oppressions. I will use *hombres necios* and *Respuesta a Sor Filotea (Sor Juana Ines De La Cruz)* to explore how Sor Juana's desire for gender equality challenged the ecclesiastical hierarchy. I will use Anzaldua and other Chicana feminist interpretations of Malinche to show how Latinas are capable of re-imagining our historical and contemporary realities.

Historical background

There are countless interpretations of who Malinche was, and how she survived. Yet there are few agree upon the facts. She was born in the early 1500's, and lived for

approximately 20-30 years. She was an indigenous woman given to the Spanish conquistador, Hernán Cortés by a nahuatl tribe (commonly known as Aztec). In her life she became tri-lingual speaking a Mayan, Nauhatl, and eventually Spanish. She became Cortes' interpreter, mistress, and mother of the first (at least symbolically) mestizo children.

Sor Juana Ines De La Cruz de Asbaje y Ramírez de Santillana, was born in 1648. She was a poet, playwright, philosopher, scientist, astronomer, theologian, intellectual genius and feminist. Most discourse about her focuses on how she defended women's right to study. Yet few point to her "radical" view that indigenous people were human beings and had souls. She is most famous for her letter, *Respuesta a Sor Filotea*, which is a response to the ecclesiastical hierarchy who challenged Sor Juana's studious nature. It has since been hailed as the first feminist manifesto.

Gloria Anzaldua was born to share-cropper/field-worker parents on September 26th, 1942 in South Texas. She was born in a mostly Chicano and Mexican community where most people were farm workers, and did not attend school. She was the first in her family to attend college in 1968 and she received a BA in English, Art and Secondary Education from Pan American University and an MA in English and Education from the University of Texas at Austin. She went on to publish children's books and sociology books and is well known for her book, *Borderlands* about mestizaje. She died of complications related to her battle with diabetes in 2004.

Methodology

Thanks to a grant from the Honors Department, I was able to travel to Austin Texas to conduct research at the Nettie Lee Benson Library on Latin America. The

unique resources at the rare books section in this library provided me with first hand documents published and created during these women's lifetimes. For example, Sor Juana's first edition of poetry book, published during her lifetime, her renunciation letter published during her lifetime, signed in blood, and the first publication of *Respuesta a Sor Fioleta*. As for Malinche, I was able to take photographs of the *Lienzo De Tlaxcala*, a painting which is full of depictions of her translating for Cortés and Moctezuma, and a number of other images of her painted in the 1500's. Finally, the library contains over 300 boxes of unpublished manuscripts, letters, and personal items of Gloria Anzaldua, including her "to do" lists and her deck of handmade tarot cards-to name a few.

With these documents, I was able to use content analysis to piece together a picture of what their lives must have been like. I also connected their stories to conduct a historical genealogy of how their actions changed society and created a space in which they could continue to transcend external boundaries placed upon them. In essence, this is a comparative genealogical analysis of these three women to address the following research questions.

Research questions

In what ways have these women transcended social expectations of the role of women during their respective time periods? How have traditional Spanish values within Mexican and Chicano communities permeated the lives of these women? What is the connection among the spiritual beliefs among these women? How did they survive and thrive despite the male dominated environments in which they lived?

Malintzin/ Dona Marina / Malinche /Malinali

The image of Malinche has undergone transformations within the Mexican and Chicano/a paradigms. Her life story is debatable, since there are only a few documents that talk about her early life. Yet, her name has become an iconic symbol within Mexican and Chicano culture, being used in everyday vocabulary. Malinche is known for serving as a translator for Cortés during the encounter between the Spanish and the Aztecs. Malinche and Cortez had a child together, who became the first symbolic mestizo, mixed indigenous and Spanish. Even though most of what we know about the encounter between the Spanish and the indigenous Mexican tribes is based on Malinche's translations, we know very little about Malinche's life. Popular memory of her is a mere concept rather than an actual person. Malinche the concept is full of assumptions about Malinche the person that are entirely false. These concepts are important to examine so that Malinche can transcend the conceptual binary through which she has been viewed.

First of all, it is important to unlearn the falsities surrounding Malinche and her culture and society that have been passed down through the dominant culture's (in this case European) version of history. To begin with, Malinche, the name by which we remember her is not her birth name. Some accounts claim that her given name was "Malinalli Tenepal," others claim it was "Malintzin," while still others claim that she was "Malina." (Perez Chan 10) The Spanish renamed her as Dona Marina, and she was remembered through mainstream history as "Malinche". I will use Malinche in reference to her, but it is important to note Malinche was not her given name.

Secondly, she was not "Aztec", as Chicano and Mexican-American paradigms view her. In fact, according to Anna Lanyon, "Aztec" is not a word you will find

anywhere in contemporary sixteenth century accounts of the Spanish conquest. (65) Rather, the people of central Mexico in Teotihuacan were called the Culua-Mexica. While her origins are debatable, Jaltiplan is the most plausible place, based on both oral traditions of her grandson and the account of Bernal Diaz Del Castillo (Lanyon 28). Del Castillo records state that she was from Paynala, which is where refugees from Jaltiplan fled after being threatened by the ravages of pirates (28). In her town, she was born into provincial nobility (Lanyon, 147). Her mother did not want to go against the norms and allow her daughter to rule over Paynala, so she sold her to some merchants who sold her to the Culua-Mexica, where they spoke Nahuatl, a foreign language, since she grew up speaking a Mayan dialect. As we can see, there were multiple indigenous cultures and groups in Mexico before the Spanish arrived. Colonial memory minimizes this diversity of indigenous groups into Columbus' infamously mistaken term "Indians." In this region the "Indians" are remembered as "Aztecs." This minimization ignores the multiple identities within Meso-America. After all, according to Anzaldua, "true multiculturalism endangers white males and forces them to feel ashamed of their cultures by presenting the histories and perspectives of ethnic groups." In addition to white males, it complicates how popular memory views Malinche and the diversity of the Mexican people.

Finally, Moctezuma is known in European history as the emperor, the ruler, and the leader of the Culua-Mexica society. But, in Nahuatl, he was the Tlatoani, translated as "he who speaks." He was the only one who could speak for his people, and make decisions for the Culua-Mexica. Women, on the other hand, "regardless of their class status, were explicitly forbidden from speaking out on high matters of religion and state. They had no official voice." (Lanyon 118)

Yet, Malinche spoke on both matters of religion, Catholicism and the State. She transcended the societal expectations, not only for women, but also for people of her class, and status as a former slave, not only through her



voice, but also through the mere act of making eye contact with Moctezuma. Bernal Diaz Del Castillo took note of how none of Moctezuma's attendants ever looked him in the face, "all kept their eyes lowered most reverently..." (Lanyon 116) In the following image taken from the Florentine codex from 1550, Malinche gazes directly into Moctezuma's eyes.

None of these complex details of Malinche are taken into account in the simplistic and problematic views that have permeated Malinche among Chicano and Mexican communities. Despite her incredible translation capabilities and her role as the bridge between two cultures, she is remembered in vain. Many Chicano/a and Mexican communities in the United States use the term, "malinche" as an insult, signifying "traitor" or "sellout". In fact, Mexican newspapers in the 1960's popularized the term, "malinchista" to be used "to denounce all those who have been corrupted by foreign influences" (Contreras 109). The following excerpt is taken from a Mexican newspaper, "We Chicanos have our own share of Malinche, which is what we call traitors to la raza who are of la raza...In the service of the gringo, malinche's attack their own brothers, betray our dignity and manhood, cause jealousies and mis-understandings among us, and actually seek to retard the advance of Chicanos, if it benefits themselves" (Contreras 108).

On the other hand, some view her as a victim, a slave to Cortés and the Spaniards. To them, she symbolizes unreliability and victimization. (Contreras 107). For instance, Octavio Paz views her as “a woman who suffered the humiliation of sexual violation and emotional manipulation” (Contreras 110). She is seen within a conceptual binary, a mere helpless victim or a malicious traitor. “In gendered paradoxes of colonial memory, such commemorations accompany the silencing, trivialization, and erasure of indigenous women and obscure their complicated historical roles.” (Huhndorf 106) This erasure of the importance of indigenous women in mainstream media is problematic; however, there has been a reevaluation of La Malinche within Chicana feminist paradigms.

In the mid-1970's, however, a reevaluation of pre-Colombian culture surfaced, in which, Cordelia Candelaria presented La Malinche as a “Chicana feminist prototype.” (Contreras 107). Adalaia del Castillo formulated Malintzin's actions as “women's resistance to Aztec violence and oppression.” (Contreras 111). She reexamines this myth of Malinche as a traitor and redefines Malinche's role. Rather than being responsible for the destruction of a civilization, she should be credited for “the beginning of the mestizo nation” or the creation of another. According to Gloria Anzaldua, she is one of the three mothers of the gente Chicana. Octavio Paz calls her “Mother of all Mexicans” (Contreras 110). Malinche was able to break free from the problematic, pervasive paradigm through which she has traditionally been viewed.

Another conceptual binary in which Malinche is viewed is whore/chingada² dicotomy. According to Gloria Lopez, she “gave herself by opening up to el conquistador Hernan Cortés...and became the ultimate symbol of la chingada she opened up to the invader in more than one way.” Perhaps she gave herself up strategically; after all there are stories of other women who were beaten for not giving themselves up. Based on one first hand account, Michele Cuneo a member of Columbus’s second expedition encapsulates the sexism and racism in the treatment of native women by the Spanish,

While I was on the boat, I captured a very beautiful Carib woman, and with whom, having brought her into my cabin, and she being naked as is their custom, I conceived the desire to take my pleasure. I wanted to put my desire to execution, but she was unwilling for me to do so, and treated me with her nails in such wise that I would I have preferred never to begun...I took a rope end and thrashed her well, following which she produced such screaming and wailing...Finally we reached an agreement such that...she seemed to have been raised in a veritable school of harlots. (Novas 60)

The Carib woman resisted the sexual desires of this Spanish man, and subsequently was whipped, raped, physically abused, and tortured. Being trilingual and having travelled the lands, perhaps Malinche had heard of the treatment of indigenous women if they were to resist. Her strategic choice to “give in” secured her survival.

From the sexual encounters between Malinche and Cortez, Malinche had two children, Martin Cortes and Maria Xaramillo. According to Federico Gomez de Orozco,

² For Octavio Paz la Malinche embodies *la chingada* or the devalued feminine condition present in the sex lives of Mexican women who open up, women who rupture themselves through the sex act and whose feeling of inferiority, betrayal, and dishonor are unavoidable by essence. Accordingly, the antithesis of la Malinche is *la Virgen de Guadalupe*: the sacred, pure, and immaculate *madre de los mexicanos* whose presence is central in the life of the Mexican Catholic Church after her controversially miraculous appearances in the early 1530s in Mexico City.

“soon after Martin’s birth, Cortes took the infant from Malinche and have him to his cousin Luis Altamirano.” (Lanyon, 209). She was never able to raise her first born. Lanyon draws a chilling conclusion based on this fact, she claims that Malinche’s story is parallel to La Llorona. Is it possible that La Llorona, the legendary woman within Chicano and Mexican American folklore was indeed Malinche crying for her children?

Malinche is not the only indigenous women being remembered as a traitor. In fact, according to Shari Huhndorf, “The role of traitor falls most frequently to Native Women, who are remembered if at all almost exclusively as collaborators in the invasion. For example, Sacajawea is represented as the “trusty little Indian guide ...whose faithful servitude resulted in the successful completion of the famous expedition of Captains Meriweather Lewis and William Clark...opening her country.” (Mojica, 67-68). It is the goal of indigenous feminism to counter these narratives by depicting these women in a different light. For example, Mojica counters this understanding using performance to tell narratives that depict her as “a revered Shoshone leader, multilingual interpreter, negotiator of treaties, and spokesperson on behalf of her nation...” (Huhndorf 106) While most indigenous women are remembered as traitors, there has been at least one Creole woman who is celebrated as national hero and even represented in contemporary Mexican national currency.



Sor Juana Ines De La Cruz

Sor Juana Ines De la Cruz de Asbaje y Ramírez de Santillana, born just after the Renaissance period in 1648, was indeed a Mexican Renaissance woman. In stark contrast to Malinche, much of her life is well-known and documented in published works, letters, plays and poetry. In fact, she was a poet, playwright, philosopher, scientist, astronomer, theologian, and an intellectual genius, all-despite the fact that women were forbidden from reading and writing in Mexico during the era in which she lived. But most of all she was a feminist, a radical for the 17th century. She believed that women should be educated just like men.

Sor Juana's unique social location as a Mexican born Creole mestiza genius provided her few tools to develop her intellectual passions. She was a colonial mestiza, insofar as she had mixed heritage. She was the daughter of a Creole (Spanish born in Mexico) mother and a Biscayan (Basque) father. (Kantaris). Because of this illegitimacy, she was shunned during that time period. As a woman, she had a mere two choices, "she could marry, or she could become a nun, married in effect to the church." (Henderson). During this time period in Mexico, nuns were the only women allowed to be educated. Since she never wanted to be married, she chose the life of a nun: "I became a nun because although I knew that this state of life had many incidental aspects that were repugnant to my temperament, given the total disinclination I felt toward marriage it seemed the most fitting and decent way to secure my salvation." (Kirk, 22). Her early life uncovers some insight into why she preferred life as a nun to married life.

Juana Ines De La Cruz was born in an impoverished family, and yet she was an "enthusiastic devotee of learning from the early age of three" (Schons 38). By the time

she was six or seven, she had learned about the university in Mexico and dressed up in men's clothes and pestered her mom to send her to study, where she could develop her intellectual interests (Kirk 19). But her mother scorned her for not taking on the role of women during that time period and sent her to live with her grandfather in the capital, where she secretly read many of the varied books of her grandfather.

When she was young, her family petitioned for her to be admitted to the viceregal court as a member of the marquesa's retinue. (Henderson, 76). Dona Leonora, the Marchiones of Mancera, took interest in the petition when she found out Juana Ines was a young genius that learned Latin at age eight. (76). Juana Ines became her "lady in waiting" to Dona Leonora, whose husband was the Viceroy of Mexico from 1664-1673 (Schons 38). By the age of fifteen she had already established a reputation as the most learned woman in Mexico (Schons 39). Juana Ines immediately impressed the viceroy's court with her powerful intelligence and her skilled and sensitive poetry. In fact when she was seventeen, the marques of Mancera arranged a public examination of Juana by about forty professors who taught at the University of Mexico, which was "an oral test of Juana's knowledge of theology, philosophy, mathematics, history, poetry, and other disciplines." (79). The marques of Mancera wrote that "Juana Ines fended off the questions, arguments and replies that all of them, each in his own field put to her." Despite this fame, she entered the convent when she was fifteen years old. She made this transition to confined convent life to find freedom to devote herself to her intellectual interests.

Her family forbade her from entering the University disguised as a man, so she continued her studies privately. She came under the tutelage of the Viceroy Antonio

Sebastian de Toledo, who appreciated her intelligence. He even showed her off by inviting several theologians, jurists, philosophers, and poets to a meeting, during which she had to answer, unprepared, many questions, and explain several difficult points on various scientific and literary subjects (Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography). Her eloquence and fearlessness during this "test of knowledge" made her well known throughout the viceroy court. They especially appreciated her beauty, and she had numerous marriage proposals, all of which she refused. Even though, she could not become an intellectual in the traditional way, she became an intellectual using the existing tools that she had. She gave up everything and became a nun. In her time, the convent was the only refuge where a woman could educate her mind, body, and spirit. She entered the Convent of the Order of St. Jerome at age twenty where she wrote many poems, plays, studied philosophy, music and science (Kantaris).

Societal norms defined femininity with ignorance, submissiveness, and silence. A woman's role was to get married and care for her family or marry the church and lock herself away into obedient silence. Sor Juana was none of these, she resisted in every way that she possibly could, by reading, writing, and denying the marriage proposals she was given. She often asked whether this intelligence was a gift or a curse. She inquires, "I cannot tell if heaven gave it to me as a gift or a punishment." (Henderson 81) The content of her poetry and plays resisted the patriarchy in which she lived. According to Arenal she, "employed parable, allegory, and the language of mythology to deride misogynist and other sorts of ignorance and narrow-mindedness, and to praise audacity and the free expression of opinion." (Arenal, 39). For example in her poem, *hombres*

necios, she contests the sexual double standards by mocking childish, self-imposed male fears, by defending sex workers:

*So where does the greater guilt lie
for a passion that should not be:
with the man who pleads out of baseness
or the woman debased by his plea?*

*Or which is more to be blamed—
though both will have cause for chagrin:
the woman who sins for money
or the man who pays money to sin?*

In addition to her defense of women's rights to study like men, Sor Juana also argued that Aztecs and other indigenous tribes were indeed human beings, a radical view among Creole and Spanish communities. This information has been left out of most of the discourse about Sor Juana. She is mainly looked at for her defense of women. In my literature review only one source even mentioned a play in which she defends indigenous rights. The following is taken from the loa, (short play) "America." An Aztec woman's (whose forces have been defeated by Spanish soldiers) killing is prevented by the pleas of the Spanish woman, The Aztec woman says to the Spanish woman:

*If your petition for my life
and show of Christian charity
are motivated by the hope
that you, at last, will conquer me,
defeating my integrity
with verbal steel where bullets failed,*

*then you are sadly self-deceived.
A weeping captive, I may mourn
for liberty, yet my will grows
beyond these bonds; my heart is free,
and I will worship my own gods!
[lines 226-236; p.19]*

In her time in the Convent, she contributed to colonial Spanish feminist discourse, a discourse almost non-existent during her time period. Her message was simple: women should be given the opportunity to study just like men. She believed that there was no reason that women should not be given the same opportunities that men have. She also critiques the attitudes and hypocritical behavior of men in her poem, "hombres necios."

(excerpts below, full poem in appendix). The ecclesiastical hierarchy did not like this message.

In 1691, the bishop sent her a letter “praising Sor Juana for her brilliance, but telling her that her duty was not to be brilliant, but to serve God. The role of women was to be silent, not heard.” (NietoGomez 54). Sor Juana politely wrote her famous response '*Respuesta a Sor Filotea*', defending the right of women to study and write. She said,

Surely you must know more than I; however, as I recall, Jesus did not say that women should be silent not heard. You forget the temple was a place of learning and discussion, and that women were preaching and talking to their people there, not just bowing their heads in silent prayer or absent-mindedly planning their's weeks activities...Yes its my duty to be a servant of God, but how can I understand theology if I cant understand biology, geology, psychology? If the world's supposed to be a manifestation of God's great goodness, how can I understand that if I don't know anything about it? (54)

'*Respuesta a Sor Filotea*' has been hailed as the first feminist manifesto (Kantaris).

While Malinche broke her traditional norms through speaking as a woman, Sor Juana broke her societal norms by writing as a woman. In both cases, their voice was a tool of survival through the second death. After all their loved ones had passed away, they are living in contemporary texts, plays, songs and writings.

Sor Juana used the limited tools that she had to talk back to the dominant paradigm, which viewed ignorance as feminine. But she was constantly being challenged and criticized for her views until the Church ultimately silenced her. *Respuesta A Sor Filotea* was the final piece that she ever got published. Sor Juana signed a renunciation letter declaring her humility, in “yo la peor de todas” signed in blood in 1670. (Nettie Lee Benson Library Archives). Were it not for Sor Juana's challenge to the dominant paradigms, contemporary Chicano and Mexican communities would not have progressed in their views on women nearly as rapidly. She was essential in the historical genealogy

of Chicana feminist such as Gloria Anzaldua, Cherrie Morraga, and Ana Castillo- to name a few.

Gloria Anzaldua

Gloria Anzaldua embodies what Sor Juana strove for, she never married and yet devoted her life to reading, writing poetry, and challenging patriarchy. In her shortest biography, she is described as a “feminist visionary spiritual activist poet-philosopher fiction writer.” (Keating, 3). Like Sor Juana, she is indeed a renaissance woman who describes herself as a “chicana, dyke-feminist, tejana patlache poet, writer and cultural theorist.” She has been an influential woman in Chicano studies, queer studies, and discourse on mestizaje. Unlike Sor Juana, Anzaldua was praised for her studies and writings during her lifetime. She won a number of awards for her work, such as the Lambda Lesbian Small Book Press Award for *Haciendo Cara*, an NEA Fiction Award, the Before Columbus Foundation American Book Award for *This Bridge Called My Back*, and the Sappho Award of Distinction. In addition, her text *Borderlands/La Frontera* was selected by the Literary Journal as one of the 38 Best Books of 1987 (Voices).

Gloria Anzaldua breaks free from traditional cultural norms and stigmas through her desire for education. She remembers, “That racial, cultural stigma was to me so unbearable that I had to do anything to get out, and the only way I could get out was to educate myself even though my family, my relatives, the people in surrounding areas, the farms and the ranches, they were not people who went to school.” (Anzaldua, 3). Gloria Anzaldua challenged and rebelled against the traditional Chicano values placed upon her by her family and her society, from the time when she was a young girl until her early

death. When she was young, she was harshly disciplined and called selfish for preferring to read and write as opposed to washing the dishes or cleaning up after her brothers. She says in an interview, "...my mother and my sister said I was selfish because I didn't want to do housework. I preferred reading to doing dishes or ironing my brother's shirts."

Gloria Anzaldua was born with some major health problems. Due to a rare hormonal imbalance, she began menstruating while still an infant and went through puberty when only six years old. (Keating, 5) Anzaldua remembers,

I never had a childhood, my body, my hormonal activity, made me a freak...I was different, because I had breasts and the other girls didn't...I bled and the other muchachitas didn't bleed. And because I had very thin skin, everything came in—people's words, people's looks, any kind of put down. If another person was hurting I would hurt." (Anzaldua archives)

This physical difference shaped her work and gave her tremendous compassion for those who are marked as outside the norm. (Keating 6).

As she grew older, her rebellion took on different forms. She began to rebel through her sexuality. In fact, she made the choice to be a lesbian, she claims, "for the lesbian of color, the ultimate rebellion she can make is through her sexual behavior. She goes against two moral prohibitions: sexuality and homosexuality...I made the choice to be queer (for some it is genetically inherent)" (Anzaldua 41). She made the choice to talk back to the patriarchic cultural prohibitions. As a Chicana, mestiza woman, she was caught in the middle of two cultural norms the Spanish and the indigenous. And yet both were repressive to her, she claims, "Sexuality was one of the aspects of myself personally that was relegated to the deepest depths because of my uterus and because of my two cultures. The Spaniards and the Indians are very sexually repressive of female sexuality." She sees sexuality and spirituality as inherently interconnected, when one is

explored, the other opens up. Likewise, when one is repressed, the other is repressed. To be a good daughter, mother, and woman meant that she remained pure that she cooked, cleaned, helped raise the kids, and remained passive, submissive, and most of all silent.

In addition to sexuality, she rebels through her spirituality; Gloria Anzaldua chose not to be the obedient Catholic girl her family wanted her to be. She explored many different spiritual practices including pre-colonial Aztec spirituality, Chinese astrology, and pagan spirituality. Furthermore she was educated, she could write and she had choices that the other women did not. She remembers, “when I started reading books I realized there were other roles besides being a Mexican farm worker.” This escape enabled her to explore and embrace her mixed spirituality which included a devotion to “la Virgin de Guadalupe, Nahuatl/Toltec divinities, and to the Yoruba orishás Yemayá and Oshún,” (Anzaldua 52) For example, she sees la Virgin De Guadalupe as the most potent religious, political and cultural symbol of the Chicano/mexicano, “She, like my race, is a synthesis of the old world and the new, of the religion and culture of two races in our psyche, the conquerors and the conquered. She is the symbol of the mestizo true to his or her Indian values.” (Anzaldua 52).

In her most famous text, *Borderland La Frontera, The New Mestiza* she talks about the 'mestiza' mentality, which is about flexibility and self-transformation of a Chicana. She claims that a connection to spirituality is essential in this self-transformation:

The patriarchal culture dominated by men instilled in us the picture of weak, vulnerable women. But in reality, females are subject to dualities. Women are capable of being both strong and weak, invincible and vulnerable, serpent-goddess, embody heavenly and underworld powers, mother-warrior characteristics just as the female goddesses.” (Anzaldua, 54)

Anzaldua's emphasis on spirituality as a means of strength is a powerful and enlightening image.

She also challenges the widely accepted notion that the Spanish conquered the Indians, "When the Spaniards conquered the Indians, gave us speech and language and took over the whole of Mexico and the Southwest perhaps they did not really conquer the Indian? Chicanos are 80% Indian. Most everything in our culture is Indian. There is very little Spanish. That's history." (Anzaldua 4)

Conclusion

Initially I chose these women because they embodied women who have transcended expectations of the feminine role in their societies. But the more I researched, the more commonalities I found that braid their stories together. Each woman had a unique narrative from a very young age that could have destroyed her, yet each woman instead chose to use these differences as assets to transcend expectations of them. For example, La Malinche's mother sold her into slavery, after her father declared that she should rule over Paynala. From servant, to interpreter, negotiator, and bridge between two cultures, she rose out of the ashes and used the languages this experience provided her as a tool to transcend expectations of woman. Juana Ines De La Cruz was marked with a genius mind in a poor single parent household, which marked her as different from most women and men. This difference was not welcomed by most of her society, but she used it to impress the marques of Mancera who then invited her to become her lady in waiting. Because of this transcendence into the viceroy's court, she never had to worry about money. Finally, Gloria Anzaldua's hormonal imbalance could have destroyed her self-confidence, and ability to honestly write her own narrative, since

her family always told her to keep her constant bleeding a secret. But it was in writing about her marked difference that ultimately healed Anzaldua, and gifted her with compassion for those who are different.

These women all had strong connections to La virgin Guadalupe, the mother who unites people. According to Gloria Anzaldua, La Virgin de Guadalupe is “the symbol of the mestizo...Guadalupe unites people of different races, religions, languages, chicano protestants, American Indians and whites.” (Anzaldua 52). Malinche’s connection to La Virgin de Guadalupe is one of time and geography. The apparition occurred right around the time Malinche would have been in her late 20’s. No one knows for sure the date of Malinche’s death. Some accounts date her death around 1529, though other sources give 1550’s. The apparition of la Virgin in Mexico happened in 1531. In her infamous, *Respuesta A Sor Filotea*, Sor Juana Ines De La Cruz uses the son of Mary- Jesus to defend women’s right to know about the world around them. And Gloria Anzaldua uses the image of La Virgin de Guadalupe to unite different cultures.

All three women spoke more than one language. All of them spoke Spanish. Malinche also spoke Maya and Nuahuatl, Sor Juana spoke Latin and some Nahuatl. And Gloria Anzaldua spoke English and Spanish with dialectical varieties such as: Standard English, working class and slang English, standard Spanish, standard Mexican Spanish, North Mexican Spanish dialect, Chicano Spanish, Tex-Mex, and Pachuco. This ability to communicate across cultures provided them with a dual understanding of different ways of life, perspectives of viewing the world, and finally placing them in the nepantla state.³

³ The nepantla state, the “in-between space.” Gloria Anzaldua describes the result of living in this nepantla state, “living between cultures results in ‘seeing’ double, first from the perspective of one culture, then from the perspective of another. Seeing from two or more

They also all have connections to mestizaje. Malinche is the mother of the first mestizo; Sor Juana herself is a mestiza, being Basque and Creole; and Anzaldua wrote and theorized about mestizaje. All three of them excelled despite their limited circumstances. Malinche was one of the first translators between the Spanish and the Aztecs, despite being sold as a slave twice. Sor Juana Ines De La Cruz was published internationally and her story has gone on to inspire women worldwide to develop their intellectual pursuits. Gloria Anzaldua inspired a Society for the Study of Gloria Anzaldua whose mission is to “provide a place for scholars, students, and community to come together with the intention of engaging in the continued study of Anzaldúa's intellectual and spiritual work.” All three women had internal tensions between pre-colonial and post-colonial spiritualities. Malinche was raised believing in the pre-colonial Aztec and Toltec gods and goddesses, but was later baptized into the Catholic faith. Despite not having Nahuatl blood, Sor Juana learned the language and wrote some poems in that language. All three will continue to live in the minds, spirits, and hearts of men and women for generations to come.

Performance Analysis & Details

Each medium that I am using has a specific purpose. All three mediums will be used with each woman, splitting the performance into three parts. For part one, storytelling will be used to introduce each woman's childhood. For part two, dance will

perspectives simultaneously renders those cultures transparent. Removed from that culture's center you glimpse the sea in which you've been immersed but to which you were oblivious, no longer seeing the world the way you were enculturated to see it. From the in between place of nepantla you see through the fiction of the monoculture, the myth of the superiority of the white races. And eventually you begin seeing through your ethnic culture's myth of the inferiority of mujeres. As you struggle to form a new identity a demythologization of race occurs. You begin to see race as an experience of reality from a particular perspective and a specific time and place (history), not as a fixed feature of personality or identity.”

be used to express each woman's theory. For part three, I will close with poetry (or prose in the case of Sor Juana) written by the woman, or myself. I will end with a poem I wrote about all three women. By using three mediums, diving the three women's stories into three parts, I am figuratively braiding the women's stories together. I will be using storytelling because individual memories of lived and experiences are the "features that makes storytelling so powerfully alluring." (Sanchez, 4) Personal stories are extremely powerful, and they affect people in a direct way. I will be using various dance mediums to represent the different cultural contexts of each of these women. Specifically, dance in Mexico "is a dynamic cultural expression widely practiced throughout Greater Mexico." According to early Spanish writers, "dance was an important and integral part of indigenous people's lives." And finally, "dancing is a powerful means to express personal and cultural identities" In essence, dance serves as a nonverbal mode of cultural expression.

For example, to represent Malinche I will first use Aztec dance to represent her indigenous background. Additionally, when interviewing some Aztec dancers, I have learned that Aztec dance is a spiritual practice and a philosophy of viewing the world. Through Aztec dance, the practitioners are able to see that the macrocosms and the microcosms are entirely connected, that what goes on in the macrocosms, in the planets affects what happens within each of us. Aztec dance will represent Malinche's connection to pre-colonial spirituality. Visually it will involve Malinche dressed in Aztec dress with a feathered headdress with three peacock feathers and ankle shakers made from seeds. She will light sage and perform a short Aztec dance. She will then be baptized into the Catholic religion by the symbolic pouring of water over my head, while

a Mexican colonial skirt with La Virgin De Guadalupe on the front put on over her Aztec traditional dress. Aztec music will begin, and she will dance los tapatios Mexican traditional dance to represent the tension between two different cultures. The visual representation of the two overlapping dresses and the two distinctive traditional dances will represent the symbiosis between the two unique cultures.

The next dance medium, Flamenco will be used to depict Sor Juana Ines De La Cruz. While I go back stage to change costumes, I will have prerecorded pieces of her poetry and words, as images of her flash on a large screen. I will walk out slowly and a prerecorded version of “hombres necios”, in English will play and I will dance, to the poem. Visually, Sor Juana will be dressed in a deep red flamenco dress, and blue flamenco shoes. But she will be covered with a black silk cloth to represent the silencing. She will physically be on a platform, to represent the convent she was not allowed to leave, and she will be covered from head to toe. Despite this attempted silencing, she will dance with loud stamps and beautiful elegant movements.

Sor Juana also spoke about women’s hair, how hair was a symbol of beauty, but if it covered an empty mind, it was nothing but a mask. According to Anna Nietogomez, “[Sor Juana] said that not until a woman’s mind was equal in beauty to her long hair should she have her long hair, so in three months, she would plan to read a certain amount, and if she hadn’t she would cut off her hair.” (54). In the performance, I will cut a section of my hair to honor Sor Juana. Between the dances, each woman will tell a story about herself; excerpts have been included. During the dress changes, prerecorded poems and images will be displayed.

For Gloria Anzaldua, she will begin with a pre-recorded poem about drumming. I will then break free from traditional dance forms and will use interpretive dance and belly dance to represent the sexual freedom that she created for herself and the break from traditional life. I will end with her views on nepantla and spiritual activism (see script below) Since her work was widely published, I will use her own poetry to depict her in the performance. The following is a poem about being mestiza taken from Borderlands:

*“Because I, a mestiza
continually walk out of one culture
and into another,
because I am in all cultures at the same time,
alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro,
me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio.
Estoy norteadada por todas las voces que me hablan
Simultaneamente.
(Anzaldua, 99)*

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Appendix

Hombres Necios by Sor Juana Ines De La Cruz

Hombres necios que acusáis
a la mujer sin razón,
sin ver que sois la ocasión
de lo mismo que culpáis:

si con ansia sin igual
solicitáis su desdén,
¿por qué queréis que obren bien
si las incitáis al mal?

Combatís su resistencia
y luego, con gravedad,
decís que fue liviandad
lo que hizo la diligencia.

Parecer quiere el denuedo
de vuestro parecer loco,
al niño que pone el coco
y luego le tiene miedo.

Queréis, con presunción necia,
hallar a la que buscáis,
para pretendida, Thais,
y en la posesión, Lucrecia

¿Qué humor puede ser más raro
que el que, falto de consejo,
el mismo empaña el espejo
y siente que no esté claro?

Con el favor y el desdén
tenéis condición igual,
quejándoos, si os tratan mal,
burlándoos, si os quieren bien.

Opinión, ninguna gana:
pues la que más se recata,
si no os admite, es ingrata,
y si os admite, es liviana

Siempre tan necios andáis
que, con desigual nivel,
a una culpáis por crúel
y a otra por fácil culpáis.

¿Pues cómo ha de estar templada
la que vuestro amor pretende,
si la que es ingrata, ofende,
y la que es fácil, enfada?

Mas, entre el enfado y pena
que vuestro gusto refiere,
bien haya la que no os quiere
y quejaos en hora buena.

Dan vuestras amantes penas
a sus libertades alas,
y después de hacerlas malas
las queréis hallar muy buenas.

¿Cuál mayor culpa ha tenido
en una pasión errada:
la que cae de rogada
o el que ruega de caído?

¿O cuál es más de culpar,
aunque cualquiera mal haga:
la que peca por la paga
o el que paga por pecar?

Pues ¿para qué os espantáis
de la culpa que tenéis?
Queredlas cual las hacéis
o hacedlas cual las buscáis.

Dejad de solicitar,
y después, con más razón,
acusaréis la afición
de la que os fuere a rogar.

Bien con muchas armas fundo
que lidia vuestra arrogancia,
pues en promesa e instancia
juntáis diablo, carne y mundo.

(English)

Silly, you men-so very adept
at wrongly faulting womankind,
not seeing you're alone to blame
for faults you plant in woman's mind.

After you've won by urgent plea
the right to tarnish her good name,
you still expect her to behave—
you, that coaxed her into shame.

You batter her resistance down
and then, all righteousness, proclaim
that feminine frivolity,
not your persistence, is to blame.

When it comes to bravely posturing,
your witlessness must take the prize:
you're the child that makes a bogeyman,
and then recoils in fear and cries.

Presumptuous beyond belief,
you'd have the woman you pursue
be Thais when you're courting her,
Lucretia once she falls to you.

For plain default of common sense,
could any action be so queer
as oneself to cloud the mirror,
then complain that it's not clear?

Whether you're favored or disdained,
nothing can leave you satisfied.
You whimper if you're turned away,
you sneer if you've been gratified.

With you, no woman can hope to score;
whichever way, she's bound to lose;
spurning you, she's ungrateful—
succumbing, you call her lewd.

Your folly is always the same:
you apply a single rule
to the one you accuse of looseness
and the one you brand as cruel.

What happy mean could there be
for the woman who catches your eye,
if, unresponsive, she offends,
yet whose complaisance you decry?

Still, whether it's torment or anger—
and both ways you've yourselves to blame—
God bless the woman who won't have you,
no matter how loud you complain.

It's your persistent entreaties
that change her from timid to bold.
Having made her thereby naughty,
you would have her good as gold.

So where does the greater guilt lie
for a passion that should not be:
with the man who pleads out of baseness
or the woman debased by his plea?

Or which is more to be blamed—
though both will have cause for chagrin:
the woman who sins for money
or the man who pays money to sin?

So why are you men all so stunned
at the thought you're all guilty alike?
Either like them for what you've made them
or make of them what you can like.

If you'd give up pursuing them,
you'd discover, without a doubt,
you've a stronger case to make
against those who seek you out.

I well know what powerful arms
you wield in pressing for evil:
your arrogance is allied
with the world, the flesh, and the devil!

Performance Script (subject to change)

Introduction: prerecorded, spoken word: According to Mexican folklore, there are three types of death of an individual. The first is the death we are all familiar with, the death of the physical body. The second death occurs when all of your loved ones and everyone who ever knew you, all pass away. The third type of death happens when all memories of you cease to exist. The third death may be delayed through art, history and storytelling. In this project, I aim to contribute to the collective memory of three inspiring mestiza women: Malinche, Sor Juana Ines De La Cruz, and Gloria Anzaldua. All three of these women have strong spiritual connections to both pre-colonial spirituality and Catholicism. While each of their stories is entirely unique, this connection to their spirituality, gave all three of them the strength to survive in the minds and hearts of future generations.

Malinche walks in slowly, her copili the headdress is on the floor, next to a bowl/vase of water and some sage, a shell, and a candle. She picks up some sage and lights it, she smudges the entire room returns the sage to center stage and puts on the copilli. She begins her dance with the introduction dance. The music comes on when she kneels and bows. One minute dance (cut music) attach a storm sound to the music.

When storm comes on- I drop to the floor, the skirt is already on the floor hiding a bowl of water. I take the bowl of water and pour it over my head (silence) I put on the skirt representing Catholicism and begin a Los Taptios dance. After the dance, I look into the audience and tell the story of my childhood:

The snake with four nostrils left my father one hour to live. He chose me as his successor, to rule over Paynala, after all I was his only kin. My mother never wanted me to rule over Paynala. Thought I could not handle it. So she sold me. Sold me to the pochtecas. I was tied down and carried 200 miles from Paynala to Oaxaca. I was so thirsty. I was renamed Ato by the family who purchased me as a slave. When the white men came, I was given to them, like a

string of decorative beads. They hungered for my female flesh, but Cortez would not let them devour me. He protected me. The ocean protected me. She caught me, cradled me to the shore. Where I was baptized into the Christian Religion. La Virgen protected me. I was taught all of the stories of the bible. I came to embrace the miracles of Christianity. I came to praise la Virgen y el Senor Jesus. But I never let go of my own faith, my own Gods. I tucked them away to be saved for later when I needed them. Took them out from time to time, in secret, asked them to watch over me. They helped me when I translated between Moctezuma and Cortez. Embraced me when I gave my flower to Cortez. Gave me strength when I gave birth to my firstborn. Guided me when I needed guidance. (based on historical fiction by Jane Lewis Brandt)

I gave Cortez everything. I gave him my tongue, my voice, my life. My body served as a vessel to please him, to bare our children. And you know how he repaid me? He took everything! He took my life, my soul, my first child. Took him from my arms before I could cradle him. Before I could love him, be there for him. Before I could teach him his history, before I could pass on my languages. Before I could bathe him. He took him from me. How could he? He left me, married me off to his cousin, without consulting me. But the history of my people will survive. It will survive in the minds and hearts of future generations. The Chicanos will remember us, they will remember our history.

*Beauty bathed in her hair
her sexual appeal washed over
her body
her wisdom was deeper
her tongue spoke for two cultures
her mothers tongue
and her oppressors voice
her ability to love had no boundaries,
to love him, them,
despite their cruelty
despite their difference
despite their tyranny.*

*Her genius was to fuse
the oppressed
and the oppressor.
to understand
the Spanish
and the Aztec
and the tlascalans
her ability to love
and forgive
them all
made her the mother of a mixed people.
La Madre de los mestizos.*

Sor Juana Ines De La Cruz

Part one

Pre recorded poem

Part two Hombres Necios Flamenco Dance

I become Sor Juana (unscripted)

I became a nun because it was the option that I had.

Part three silencing: Carta a Sor Fioleta

*Without my books I do not exist.
Without knowledge I am nothing.
Why does the world persecute me?
All I want is to put beauty into thought
Rather than thought into beauty.*

*Why do they agree to see me for my physical beauty?
But scurry away when I reveal my intellectual passions?
Am I crazy to desire philosophy, science and poetry
More than the thought of a family, a husband or a child?
For me, it was motherhood or my mind.*

Gloria Anzaldua

Part 1

Childhood:

One reason I kept the spirituality down is because it was so connected to the sexual, to the physical. I had this body that was a freak: I went into puberty and started bleeding when I was three months old; I had tremendous hot flashes, my breasts started growing when I was six. I was totally alien. Also I was this wide open little kid who was picking up on people feelings, thoughts, and words, and taking them all very seriously. It was very painful. My childhood was a nightmare. I started shutting down where the pain was, in my body, and became nothing but reason, head, mind. When I started opening up to the body the spiritual thing came our too because it was really connected with the body and sexuality.

When I was young, I was one with the trees, the land, and my mother; there weren't any borders. Then I became separate, and made other people and parts of myself other.

Part 2

Drumming poem

Dance

Part 3

Spirituality Writing & resistance

To me spirituality, sexuality, and the body have been about taking back that alien other. According to society, and according to Eastern philosophy and religion, I must suppress or kill a certain part of myself-the ego or sexuality. But I don't believe you have to slay the ego. I believe you have to leave it and incorporate all the pieces you've cut off, not give the ego such limelight but give some of the other parts limelight.

I need to accept all the pieces: The fucked up Gloria's go with the compassionate, loving Glorias; they're all me. To accept this view, I also had to accept the fact that God is the Devil; they're the same person; good and evil are different parts of the same coin. Christianity did this horrible thing by polarizing God and the Devil.

Sexuality was one of the aspects of myself personally that was relegated to the deepest depths because of my uterus and because of my two cultures. The Spaniards and the Indians are very sexually repressive of female sexuality.

I am a wind-swayed bridge, a cross roads inhabited by whirlwinds. Gloria, the facilitator, Gloria the mediator, straddling the walls between abysses. "your allegiance is to La Raza, the Chicano movement." Says the members of my race. "Your allegiance is to the third world" say my black and asian friends. "your allegiance is to your gender, to women, say the feminists. Then there there's my allegiance to the gay movement, to the socialist revolution, to the New Age, to magic and the occult. And there's my affinity to literature, to the world of the artist. What am I? A third world lesbian feminist with Marxist and Mystic learnings. They would chop me up into little fragments and tag each piece with a label.

You say my name is ambivalence? Think of me as Shiva, a many armed and legged body with one foot on brown soil, one on white, one in straight society, one in the gay world, the man's world, the women's, one limb in the literary world