

## "Mestizaje as Method"? Intertexts, Dichotomies and (Border)Crossings in Texts by Anzaldúa and Moraga

Anja Bandau

This article addresses various appropriations of *mestizaje* in the textual practice of women of color, drawing on disparate cultural and literary traditions. In this context I shall discuss two authors, Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga, who introduced a paradigmatic shift in the field of Chicano/a cultural production in the 1980s, as they opened up the space for a whole range of texts articulating marginal positions at the intersections of race/ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality. Here, I shall focus on Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) and Moraga's *The Last Generation: Prose & Poetry* (1993).

Ignored by parts of the Chicano critique and enthusiastically welcomed by others (above all Chicana Studies, Womens' Studies, Third World Feminist and Queer theory), these texts were received as "courageous," "groundbreaking," "taboo-breaking" (Yarbro-Bejarano 113) and as "revolutionary and subversive at many levels" (Torres 272). For many critics, Gloria Anzaldúa's and Cherríe Moraga's texts signified difference because they were articulating a critique of the universal subjects of both predominantly white feminism and, of the predominantly male and heterosexual, Chicano discourse. "Difference" not "continuity" was the key issue. In 1985 Norma Alarcón had already pointed out the impulse of Chicana authors to conceive of themselves as "first generation writers [who had] emerged from a long line of illiterates" (90). This impulse, I would argue, runs parallel to a similar approach in parts of Chicana/o criticism. But, while Chicana writers may have emerged from women who did not write in English, Spanish or any other language, they came, undoubtedly, equipped with several cultural traditions. Critics (in minority discourse) looked for an "oppositional consciousness" in the texts (cf. JanMohamed/Lloyd, Saldívar-Hull 1991); this consciousness was understood to signify, as well as enact, the breach with Western cultural traditions by appropriating and focusing on non-European traditions. Traditions and intertexts not matching this scheme were (basically) not granted particular attention and to what degree the stated subversiveness was evoked by the internal formal mechanisms of the texts was not of foremost importance.

One of the reasons for this approach did lie, no doubt, in the effort to form a canon of their own: a canon of Chicana cultural production, of Chicana literature. This emancipatory project has been carried out over the last twenty years and has brought forth significant results: making Chicanas visible, articulating their specific positions, creating a literary history and to a certain extent bringing their cultural production into the mainstream. As Chicana Studies have come of age, a now established critical practice

examines the discursive and cultural traditions present in canonical Chicano/a texts that go beyond the confines of what is considered Chicano or Chicana. The intertextual references of the texts, which are more or less explicit, are being addressed.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* has been read in several contexts with varying aims and results – as an expression of border consciousness (e.g. Saldívar-Hull 2000), of the lesbian sublime (Browdy de Hernández 245) as well as in the context of "queer" identity (Barnard) – and these readings opened up different levels of understanding. With respect to certain readings outside of Chicana/o Studies, Ethnic Studies and Literary Studies took only a few images and symbols, such as the border or the figure of la Malinche, and it has been argued that these readings reduced the specific context from which those symbols emerged. Chicana scholars critiqued the strong de-essentializing move of poststructuralist approaches that by appropriating concepts – such as Anzaldúa's *crossroads* – neglects the painful aspects of those minority subject positions and ignores the strong desire for identity.<sup>2</sup>

In response to these approaches to Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* I want to suggest a reading of both Anzaldúa's and Moraga's text that looks at the different traditions and discourses and their origins – both European and non-European – in the texts, as well as at the specific ways in which they intertwine. Texts like Anzaldúa's and Moraga's present a variety of intertextual relations and inscribe themselves not only into genuine (Latin-) American traditions prevalent on both sides of the U.S.-Mexican border, but also into what is considered as Western, European literary traditions. This specific constellation can be conceived of with the help of different theoretical models; the title of this essay refers to one of them: Chela Sandoval's "Mestizaje as Method: Feminists-of-Color Challenge the Canon" (1998). As in several other publications, the author sets out to establish a theory and method specific to the articulation and cultural production of women of color that considers its "polymodal" nature and its composition "of differing and mobile structures [...] difficult to express in traditional linear narrative" (Sandoval 353). In accordance with this approach, I will argue, using Anzaldúa's and Moraga's texts as example, that different concepts of *mestizaje* – prevalent in the Latin-American discussions of cultural contact and cultural crossing since the 1910s – structure and enable the cultural and aesthetic interventions of Chicanas in a crucial manner.

The history of *mestizaje* on the American continent points back to colonization in the early sixteenth century. Starting out with the actual genetic "mixing" (*mestizo* derived from the latin word *mixtitius*) cultural theories of *mestizaje* became particularly prominent in the context of national and Pan-American identity formation in what today is called Latin America. Far from being exclusively seen as a biological phenomenon, a number of theories on cultural, that is to say linguistic, religious and artistic, *mestizaje*

1 see Alarcón (1989, 1994); Arteaga, Pérez-Torres.

2 One example for this appropriation would be poststructuralist feminist theory such as Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter*. For a parallel argument concerning the use of la Malinche in Donna Haraway's concept of Cyborg, see Moya. For a more detailed argumentation, see Bandau.

exist. These *mestizaje* theories try to comprehend forms of cultural contact and crossing, as a mixture of different racial groups and their cultural expressions in various hierarchical relationships. The belief in the arrival at some homogeneous synthesis, a new and autonomous third cultural space, has always been present in the frame of *mestizaje* – a new culture, a national or Pan American identity different from the dominant European models. Since the first half of the twentieth century, *mestizaje* has been critically regarded by indigenists, who have pointed to the invisibility threatening the indigenous element in concepts of *mestizaje*. As a result of shifting paradigms toward de-essentialized structures (at least since the 1980s, but to be detected much earlier) a critique of the synthesizing and homogenizing aspects of *mestizaje* was brought about by approaches that focused on the process of cultural negotiation and, at the same time, has helped to establish these discourses – transculturation and hybridity – as Hispano-American models of cultural identity. From a Peruvian perspective, Antonio Cornejo Polar (1981) critiqued *mestizaje* as unifying synthesis and emphasized the heterogeneous character of national cultural production. Angel Rama (1989) adopted, and further developed, Fernando Ortiz's concept of transculturation, so as to focus on the process of mutual transformation of (sub-)cultures and described its different phases (cf. Moraña 1997). García Canclini (1989) read the U.S.-Mexican borderlands as a hybrid space where different temporalities and heterogeneous spaces coexist and, in contrast to *mestizaje*, the tensions between these times and spaces are never resolved. These theoretical approaches deal with cultural and aesthetic phenomena and negotiate national or Pan-American identity as well as artistic production out of this region. In the confines of artistic expression, Alejo Carpentier's highly influential concept "lo real maravilloso americano" (his "tercer estilo") describes a style of *mestizaje* writing that to him develops a new and independent Latin-American aesthetics out of the crossing of aesthetic and generic traditions genuine to certain sections of Latin-American popular culture (cf. Carpentier 1949). The theory of another Cuban intellectual – José Lezama Lima – focuses on the dynamics of baroque assimilation that transform and work through disparate cultural and literary traditions, their motifs and styles (cf. Lezama Lima; Borsó; Pérez Firmat; Benítez-Rojo).

In the texts by Anzaldúa and Moraga *mestizaje*, transculturation and hybridity function as cultural, epistemological models and aesthetic principles and thus contextualize not only the understanding of identity and cultural contact, but also structure the ways in which the texts deal with language, writing and symbols. Transferred to the U.S.-American context, the concepts are submitted to specific appropriation and transformation. Each of the two writers has her very own approach to *mestizaje* and combines notions of the latter with transculturation and hybridity. I will argue that the principles of synthesis and heterogeneity become interrelated, and this choice of "mestizaje as method," makes it possible to introduce other defining identity categories, like gender and sexuality, into the crossing of cultural, racial and ethnic characteristics and to display those different modes of existence as intersected and mutually constitutive.

In Gloria Anzaldúa's text *Borderlands/La Frontera*, the first reference to *mestizaje* is in the subtitle *The New Mestiza*. This subject position is explicitly taken up in the seventh, and last essay, chapter of the first part "La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a

New Consciousness" and in the poem "To Live in the Borderlands Means You," in the final section of *Borderlands'* second part. The prominent positions in the title, at the end of the two parts and in the center of the text in between the essay part and the poetry part, underline the importance given to *mestizaje* and its re-consideration. This also sheds some light on the textual consequences, in terms of structure and form. Each of the six chapters of the first part leading to the central seventh part stages one aspect of this new *mestizaje* and thus negotiates the individual elements, as, for instance, the relation of the different cultural contexts or that of body, spirit and soul. Analogy and transfer are the prominent means of establishing *mestizaje* on the level of space-geography, language, symbolic figures, art and writing. The actual border crossing between Mexican and U.S.-American societies is the starting point of a conflictive situation and leads into a space that accommodates all kinds of bordercrossers and transgressors: "Los atravesados [...] the squint-eyed, the perverse, the troublesome, the mongrel [...]" (B/F 3).

Anzaldúa's argument in *Borderlands/La Frontera* refers to several models of *mestizaje* that were developed in Mexico between 1909 and 1960. After the Mexican revolution, the discussion of Mexican culture within the confines of "hispanoamericanidad" and *mexicanidad* lead to the concept of *mestizaje* as metaphor for national identity. As a metaphor of cultural synthesis and fusion it was introduced into all spheres of society, yet real integration of the indigenous population was not achieved. Anzaldúa explicitly cites one of the most prominent and widely critiqued models from this context: José Vasconcelos' assumption of the mestizos as a fifth race – "la raza cosmica" (1925) – to which he attributed the best characteristics of all races.<sup>3</sup> Its basis – a biologic confluence of "racial" traits on the groundings of nineteenth-century eugenics – is transferred into the realm of cultural mixture. This idea of biological and cultural mixture is problematic in two respects: The concept of a fifth, chosen "mestizo" race only reverses European race theories; it does not overcome them. New mechanisms of exclusion come into being, and it is precisely the indigenous element that is assimilated and in this way marginalized and silenced (cf. Basave Benítez, Valenzuela).

These problematic aspects can only be partially overcome by different modifications in Anzaldúa's text, where the following passage is introduced by a reference to Vasconcelos' *raza cosmica*:

At the confluence of two or more genetic streams, with chromosomes constantly "crossing over," the mixture of races [...] provides hybrid progeny, a mutable, more malleable species with a rich gene pool. From this racial, ideological, cultural and biological

3 The concept of Vasconcelos, Mexican philosopher and minister of education during the government of Alvaro Obregón, underlies the Mexican national subject of the Mestizo. It is developed in the context of "el Ateneo de la Juventud" – an intellectual circle around philosophical thinkers and writers, such as Alfonso Reyes, Pedro Henríquez Ureña, the anthropologist and sociologist Manuel Gamio, the politician Justo Sierra, who all advocate specific attitudes towards *mestizaje* and its impact on Mexican reality and artistic expression. (cf. Leinen). Vasconcelos approaches the indigenous elements of this fusion through the long past of Aztec civilization, its myths and gods, which adds to the messianic and mythic tone present in Vasconcelos' view of the mestizo.

crosspollination, an "alien" consciousness is presently in the making – a new *mestiza* consciousness, *una conciencia de mujer*. (B/F 77)

One of the discursive moves to overcome the biologicistic stance is "working the psyche." By transferring biological *mestizaje* into a *mestiza consciousness* the text makes a de-essentializing move. At this point James Hillman's *Re-Visioning Psychology* (1975) – introduced as intertext in an endnote to the fourth chapter – comes into play as it provides the (psychoanalytical) operations for the generation of that *mestiza consciousness*. The "alien consciousness" that is in the making reverberates with another prominent approach. It is Octavio Paz's concept of *otredad* that provides an essential characteristic of Mexican identity. Similar to Paz, who in *El laberinto de la soledad* (1950) defines Mexican identity through in-depth psychological analysis of Mexican everyday life, Anzaldúa creates the figure of the new *mestiza consciousness* from the situation of women of color. Contrary to Vasconcelos, though, Anzaldúa genders *mestizaje*/the *mestizo* and integrates (all) positions marginalized along the confines of sexuality and gender into her borderlands and into her *mestiza*: "She learns to juggle cultures. [...], she operates in a pluralistic mode-nothing is thrust out [...] nothing rejected, nothing abandoned" (B/F 79).

In relation to this all-inclusive move Anzaldúa's *La Frontera* articulates the problematic position of the figure of the indigenous woman (*la india*) in *mestizaje*: It is only in a shadow existence (as *la sombra*) and as blind spot that her position can be approached: "The dark-skinned woman has been silenced, gagged, caged, bound into servitude [...], bludgeoned [...], sterilized" (B/F 22). Through the symbolic representations of pre-Columbian goddesses, Anzaldúa attempts to empower the indigenous element. This move was, however, criticized, since it did not address the actual living conditions of indigenous people.<sup>4</sup> One figure that is paradigmatic for Anzaldúa's approach to the indigenous is the earth goddess Coatlicue, and she, at the same time, represents the structure of the text. As a pre-Columbian goddess she signifies plurality-in-unity, heterogeneity and wholeness. This syncretic symbol is linked to the Coatlicue state – a transformative process that enables the making of the new *mestiza consciousness*. Hence, Coatlicue represents the double movement that characterizes the whole text: on the one hand, she presents the synthesizing move – a moment of closing – and, on the other hand, she shows the ongoing, open process of negotiating different subject positions.<sup>5</sup>

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4 This critique reverberates in the approach of the first wave of indigenist literature in Mexico and beyond that in the indigenist critique in general as represented by Cornejo Polar (see above).

5 One prominent structural example of "mestizaje as method" lies in the bipolar structure of the book's title "*Borderlands/La Frontera*" that is followed, and superseded, by the subtitle *New Mestiza* as the third element. The merging of two elements, pointing to distinct linguistic and cultural traditions, into a third one (symbolizing fusion), is echoed in many passages and formal arrangements in the text. At the same time, one could read this arrangement in a different way: all three elements are equally present and represent a system of references that go back and forth within the text without resulting in a final

The integrative, synthetic aspect becomes evident in the language of the third element as a new, separate territory.

That focal point or fulcrum, that juncture where the mestiza stands, is where phenomena tend to collide. It is where the possibility of uniting all that is separate occurs. This assembly is not one where severed or separate pieces merely come together. Nor is it a balancing of opposing powers. In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. That third element is a new consciousness – a mestiza consciousness – and [...] its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm. [...] The work of mestiza consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner. (B/F 79f.)

This integrative movement, however, is permanently undermined. The transformative process – "continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm" – competes simultaneously with the impulse to find closure – "uniting all that is separate" – and arrive at stasis. The metaphor of the "crossroads" contrasts with the image of a "new and separate territory" as a third element, the re-territorializing move to another space. While the former signifies an open concept similar to the image of bridging, the latter can be read as oppositional counteridentity.

Moraga's view of *mestizaje* is much more ambivalent than Anzaldúa's. What has been already problematic in Anzaldúa's text, turns out to be even more delicate in Cherríe Moraga's *The Last Generation* (1993), a collection of essays and poetry arranged into five sections. To Moraga, *mestizaje* is a historical phenomenon brought about by the violent processes of conquest and colonization and is intimately related to the violation of the indigenous woman (Malinche) by the European colonizer.<sup>6</sup> Remembering this violent act the authorial voice in *The Last Generation* mistrusts *mestizaje* and its utopian potential. Entitled "The Breakdown of the Bicultural Mind," the fourth section of the book discusses *mestizaje* at the turn to the twenty-first century and perceives it as a present-day reality that violently breaks into the lives of people of color. By opening with an epitaph from the seventeenth-century Mayan epos *Chilam Balam*: "Mestizos, children of violence, neither slaves nor masters." (LG 89), the essay presents the mestizo as a liminal and ambivalent position. From the problematic "mixed-blood scenario that ends in suicide, that ends in rebirth" (LG 113), the text develops its framing question: "What fiery pit awaits us, we new breed of 21st-century mestizo?" (ibid.)

Moraga uses striking vocabulary to name *mestizaje* and its results: the apparently anachronistic terms "breed," "half-breed," "mixed-blood," "métis," "creole," "mulatto," "quadroon" have their origin in Latin-American and U.S.-American hierarchies along the lines of race. In Moraga's text these names reintroduce the differentiation and the hierarchies inherent in *mestizaje*, and thus confront multicultural(ist) terminology, pointing to the discontinuities within the position of in-betweenness. The intensified process of mixing that Moraga sets as point of departure for her intervention is shown

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closure. This implies a far more open construction, a process of negotiations pointing towards theories of transculturation and hybridity.

6 This approach is already present in Moraga's first book *Loving in the War Years* (1983). For a more detailed analysis, see Bandaü.

to create a distance to the position of *la india* that becomes more and more imperative. As one of the consequences, *mestizaje* is re-read from an indigenous point of view, focusing, among others, on the still existing hierarchies in the concept. Moraga's *Last Generation* also makes very clear that this "longed for" perspective cannot be re-established as an authentic origin because there is almost no material evidence of this indigenous past available. Landscape, in historiographic records or other proofs, becomes testimony of an origin that is not tangible anymore. As Moraga's text makes reference to this absence at the origin there is a need for substitution.

Against the traumatic history of origin Moraga postulates a programmatic "We invent ourselves" (LG 114). In that context the narrator resumes her love and sexual relationships with women and points to the intersection of sexual desire and race. A community of loving women takes the place of *la familia*. This representational occupation of *la indias'* place by the women lovers is paradigmatic for the text: wherever the other that makes identity formation possible does not exist, something has to be invented in its place. *Queer Aztlán* – the utopian space that Moraga creates in *The Last Generation* – is a result of this move. It reformulates Aztlán – the territorial founding myth of the Chicano Movement – inscribing into this space marginalized positions along the lines of sexuality and gender: "we seek a nation strong enough to embrace a full range of racial diversities, human sexualities, and expressions of gender. In a 'queer' Aztlán, there would be no freaks, no 'others'" (LG 164). Moraga's *Queer Aztlán* is grounded in the actual territory, but – as the precarious nature of the origin, the text refers to, is displayed – its subversiveness also lies apart from the re-integrating gesture in a poetics that the text refers to as a "queer mixture of glyphs."

In a second move I want to examine the implications of *mestizaje* as aesthetic principle, as poetics. *Borderlands/La Frontera* presents itself as "an assemblage, a montage, a beaded work" (B/F 66). This is true for the established intertextual relations as well as when dealing with genre. The reference to Anzaldúa's (and also Moraga's) cross-genre writing as hybrid bodies of texts may be understood in two ways: first as the juxtaposing and mixing of prose/essay and poetry and, second, as the juxtaposing and intermingling of different "modes of enunciation" (Genette) in autobiographical writing.

On a macro level, the binary structure of Anzaldúa's text is striking: the text is divided into one part consisting of essays and into another one consisting of poems. (The two parts differ typographically and in their use of modes of enunciation.) However, manifold intratextual relations exist between both parts and their thematic development runs parallel. A closer look at the first part, though, makes clear that the essay chapters are already characterized by the formal interweaving of prose and lyrical passages. The discursive (in Benveniste's use of the term) and argumentative modes are subverted by the lyrical. The liminal status of the essay between fiction and diction (cf. Genette), between fictionality and referentiality, becomes even more precarious. The crossing of different modes of enunciation – of historiographic, impersonal narration and personal voices, of bibliographic references and lyrical passages – is consistently pursued. These crossings have the effect of de-authorizing academic writing, while, at

the same time, literary genres are authorized through referentiality. The text postulates antagonisms, only to overcome them in a second move.

The method of including intertexts in *Borderlands/La Frontera* is primarily through incorporation. This might be considered to be one of the main characteristics of literature (as discourse) in general. However, because the first part of the book has extensive endnotes which refer to appended bibliographic notes, the relation between both techniques has the effect of making the process of incorporation visible. Furthermore, there is a certain tension between the two techniques. The bibliographic reference system displays not only academic authority (to back up the argument of the text) but also presents an important element of scholarly writing in itself. One could also argue that these bibliographic references create a theoretical context tied to Anzaldúa's text. This, however, is only partially true and is contradicted by the use Anzaldúa makes of certain texts as only "raw material." This textual strategy resonates with cultural practices, such as "incorporation" or "anthropophagy." Both concepts have been pinpointed and defined as processes of cultural appropriation in the Brazilian context of cultural mixture and as emancipation from European models. The relation that can be established is to Brazilian *modernismo* and one of its well-known manifestos: Oswald de Andrade's *Manifesto antropófago*. In this text from 1928 Andrade programmatically "devours" European theories to produce something innately Brazilian, so as to use them as "raw material" for the invention of a Brazilian culture. Parallel to this (procedure) Anzaldúa "devours" arguments and whole passages of literary or scientific texts (e.g., anthropological, sociological, historiographic) to create a new argument from these fragments.<sup>7</sup>

For an intertext that frames Anzaldúa's theoretical approach and structures her text, let me briefly come back to Hillman's *Revisioning Psychology*. His main objective is the process of soulmaking that has to be achieved via different processes of working through – pathologizing, mythologizing and multiplying the self – and personifying critical aspects of the psyche. Anzaldúa takes over this project to re-integrate body and spirit of the subject that is "in the making" in her text. Influenced by the romantic poets, Hillman believes this process to be best realized in literature. He conceives of his own work as *bricolage*,<sup>8</sup> because he turns to literature and to many other discursive traditions, like philosophy, psychiatry, history, theology and alchemy so as to "revision psychology." Similarly, Anzaldúa's text draws from diverse discursive traditions in order to weave her text and the new mestiza consciousness. In this respect, a third influential intertext has to be mentioned: the work of the Spanish mystic Teresa de Avila. Beyond the sacralizing effect, due to the mystic recourse to language that Anzaldúa introduces into her text, and, beyond a critique of the violent neglect of womens' bodies in Catholicism, this intertextual link enables the introduction of an

7 See Anzaldúa's use of John R. Chávez' *The Lost Land: The Chicano Images of the Southwest* and her use of anthropological texts, especially June Nash's study "The Aztecs and the Ideology of Male Dominance."

8 "The characteristic feature of mythical thought is that it expresses itself by means of a heterogeneous repertoire ... it has nothing else at its disposal. Mythical thought is therefore a kind of intellectual 'bricolage'" (Hillman 250).



alternative gendered tradition of self-writing that uses the tradition of confession differently from that associated with Augustinus.<sup>9</sup>

*The Last Generation. Prose & Poetry* refers to the co-presence of two genres already in the subtitle. The introduction reads thus: "So these are not essays as much as they are poems and these are not poems as much as they are essays" (LG 4). The speaker contends that "possibly the distinction no longer matters" (ibid.). Moraga's text does not arrange essay and poetry in a dichotomous way as Anzaldúa's does, both genres alternate and intersect. The presentation of the book as a "queer mixture of glyphs" (LG 4) refers to the fact that it draws on different writing and historiographic traditions. The genre of pre-Columbian and colonial codices – an "indigenous" genre – serves as model for the Chicano codex Moraga designs as an alternative to historiography. Her text comes equipped with prophetic qualities to work against the disintegration of her ethnic group.

The Chicano codex is the map back to the original face. Its scribes are the modern-day tlamatinime. We grab our raza's face and turn it in our palm. We hold up the obsidian mirror, tell them, "Look, gente, so that you might know yourselves, find your true face and heart, and see." (LG 187)

The Mesoamerican codices are hybrid texts themselves: they unite various pictographic and scriptural traditions and develop new glyphs from the encounter of different cultural traditions and writing cultures, the indigenous and the Hispanic. Due to the necessity of cultural translation they developed an indohispanic system that functioned as "medio de transmisión vinculando a ambas tradiciones culturales" (Noguez/Wood 18). The well-known Mexican anthropologist Miguel León-Portilla (1966, 1992, 1999, 2003) underlines the importance of the codices for another version of *histor(i)ography*. In using this hybridized genre that is predestined for cultural translation between different cultural traditions, Moraga's "drawing made of words" searches and creates a new reference system to "interpret the signs of the time" (LG 190).

In summary, texts like Anzaldúa's and Moraga's, evidently, refer to Latin-American traditions, because cultural theory in the form of *mestizaje* in the Latin-American context has been perceived as an attempt to deal with a new reality that has emerged from cultural contact. At the same time, it serves as the basis for national identity formation and is, in this context, to be seen as an oppositional practice in response to European traditions. Correspondingly, the appropriations of *mestizaje* concepts in Anzaldúa's and Moraga's texts assume this oppositional stance in the U.S.-American context against "ideological zones of cultural purity" (Rosaldo). There is, however, a coexisting tendency in these appropriations to expose both, Latin-American concepts of *mestizaje* and U.S.-American society, to a new understanding of culture that is not static but situational and to be negotiated at the intersections of various discourses. The process of this textual appropriation in Chicana writing has the effect of sending established cultural meanings in the U.S.-American context into disarray. At the specific

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9 On the alternative autobiographic tradition, see Gilmore; on Anzaldúa's affiliation with this tradition, see Bandau.

intersection of discourses of gender, sexuality and race, traditional concepts of *mestizaje* are subverted. Both texts use the model of *mestizaje* to present a subjectivity that is constituted by various discourses such as race, class, gender and sexuality. However, this reference is made differently: Anzaldúa's text is created in analogous movements of incorporation. It uses antithetical constellations that are dissolved, synthesized and overcome. On the content level, the mestizo is opened up to several subject positions. Synthesis and processes of transformation are equally present in the text as two competing impulses. Consequently, I would like to suggest that the prominence of one textual stance or the other largely depends on the reader's interaction. Nevertheless, to negate one of these aspects would mean to reduce one important argument the texts convey. It is on the levels of discourse and genre that the approach to *mestizaje*, and its structural implications, are sought in both texts. Moraga rereads *mestizaje* from an assumed indigenous point of view, as a sometimes violent and dystopian process into which she reinscribes its ambivalences. Her queering move – the displacement and subjection to change of Chicano cultural symbols by a lesbian subcultural critique – subverts established meanings. The poetics of a Chicana/o codex as a queer mixture of glyphs keeps *mestizaje* as a movement that combines and rearranges heterogeneous traditions, genres, symbols and codes that – in themselves already hybrid structures – are generating a variable utopian space impossible to final closure.

These textual moves of *mestizaje* can be read as paradigmatic examples for the artistic and aesthetic oppositional strategies of Chicana/os and women of color. Evolving from the impulse to bring together/assemble the cultural, political and aesthetic practices in a space of theory is what makes Sandoval define *Chicana mestizaje* as "a syncretic form of consciousness made up of transversions and crossings" and "another kind of critical apparatus and political operation in which *mestiza* feminism comes to function as a *working chiasmus* (a mobile crossing) between races, genders, sexes, cultures, languages, and nations" (Sandoval 352, last emphasis added). In doing so she is presenting a theory that emerged from the appropriation of Latin-American *mestizaje* theories in the context of U.S.-American minority and feminist discourse. As theorizing that evolves from the context of U.S.-American minority and feminist discourse, it contributes to the understanding of cultural contact and transfer. Sandoval's input lies not only in generating such a theory but also in relating it to theoretical concepts, such as strategic essentialism (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak), the performative (Judith Butler) and the cyborg (Donna Haraway). To introduce a reformulated *mestizaje* as a theoretical concept of Chicanas and women of color means to provide their theoretical approach with visibility and to situate it inside the theoretical discourse of different epistemological communities. Its double impulse of opening (transformational moves) and closure (tactical positioning) differentiates this *Chicana mestizaje* from such concepts as hybridity. Though other theories of cultural contact, such as hybridity and transculturation are appropriated, it is an oppositional stance to keep the name *mestizaje* and to mark a genuine cultural and theoretical production of Chicanas.

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