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Disability and American Philosophies

Edited by
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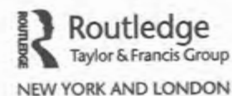

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9 Gloria E. Anzaldúa and Crip Futurity in the Americas

Andrea J. Pitts

Gloria E. Anzaldúa's (1942–2004) writings, no doubt, fit uneasily within many mainstream framings of "American Philosophy." While her work has gained recognition over the past decade for contributing to a broader understanding of "Philosophy of the Americas" and "Inter-American Philosophy," more narrow framings of "American Philosophy," rooted in the history of U.S. pragmatism have tended to overlook her contributions to discussions of the shape and thematics of philosophy practiced across the settler nation of the United States.[1] In this regard, it comes as no surprise that Anzaldúa's work does not neatly frame or fit within discourses regarding uniquely "American" contributions to philosophy. In addition to affirming values such as pluralism, experimentalism, and meliorism—values shared by classical U.S. pragmatists such as John Dewey and William James—Anzaldúa's body of work is also dedicated to contesting the rigidity and status of boundaries and borders, including those of the U.S. nation-state. Her first published monograph, *Borderlands/La frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), for example, is dedicated to "*todos mexicanos* [all mexicans] on both sides of the border" and deals extensively with the U.S.-Mexico border as "*una herida abierta*/an open wound" that has brought violence—political, cultural, and intimate forms of violence—on those who inhabit the borderlands ([1987]1999, 25). In this, Anzaldúa considers the U.S.-Mexico border an "unnatural boundary," and the span of her theoretical, poetic, and pedagogical contributions throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s highlight the fraught conditions and creative possibilities located through such contested demarcations (Ibid.).

With disability studies, Anzaldúa's work also has a complicated relationship. Notably, Anzaldúa wrote explicitly that she did not identify as "disabled," although she did carefully describe and thematize in her writings her own embodied experiences of living with type 2 diabetes, the management of chronic pain, and her experiences of an endocrine condition that led her to begin menstruation as an infant and that eventually required her to undergo a hysterectomy at age 38. She also wrote of pain as a locus for creativity and power, and, as her readers such as Suzanne Bost (2010) have noted, her work can be read as a critique of

Anglocentric, individualist models of "women's health." In addition, disability theorists over the last two decades have noted the relevance of her work for disability critique. For example, Robert McRuer's *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (2006) considers Anzaldúa's commitment to *los atravesados*/border crossers, as a means through which to read her as a crip theorist, as someone whose "terms and concepts [might] function to bring together, even as they threaten to rip apart" (McRuer 2006, 39). Specifically, McRuer reads her writings as working against both compulsory able-bodiedness and compulsory heterosexuality, two systems of symbolic and material organization heightened through neoliberal capitalism and mainstream disability, feminist, and LGBT rights and inclusion discourses. More recent engagement with her work within disability activism and theory have looked to her writings for their naming of the racial politics of disability discourses, including the erasure and/or neglect of people of color within the history of disability activism and the study of disability. Aurora Levins Morales, for example, notes in a 2013 epistolary piece written to the then-deceased Anzaldúa, that one of the reasons why Anzaldúa may not have identified as "disabled" during her lifetime was that "a strong, vocal, politically sophisticated, disability justice movement led by queer working class women and trans people of color who understood [her] life [...] wasn't there yet" and did not exist during her lifetime (Morales 2013, 4–5).

In these ways and others, Anzaldúa's writings and her life place her precariously within discussions of both "American Philosophy" and "disability." Yet, to borrow a concept from Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2011), it is precisely due to this "misfit" character of Anzaldúa's career-long activism, coalition building, and writings, that she is an important figure to analyze within these areas of study. As Garland-Thomson notes, a "misfit" "describes an incongruent relationship between two things [and t]he problem with a misfit [...] inheres not in either of the two things but rather in their juxtaposition, the awkward attempt to fit them together" (2011, 592–593). Thus, to place Anzaldúa's work within such "awkward" relations with American philosophy and disability critique, I turn specifically to several key concepts from Anzaldúa's oeuvre that center questions of embodiment, illness, pathology, and history in a manner that, I argue, adds resources to a queer crip critique of the able-bodied heteronomativity of institutional medicine in the Americas. In particular, in the first section, I outline several key terms from Anzaldúa's middle and late theoretical writings such as *mestiza consciousness*, *nos/otras*, and the *Coyolxauhqui imperative* as framing concepts for a discussion of her early 1980 poem "Holy Relics." In the second section, I turn to themes of disability across the span of her writings, including her early work "La Prieta" and her late dialogues with AnaLouise Keating on her reluctance to identify as "disabled." In the third section, I argue that "Holy Relics" opens a dialogue

on criticisms of the pathologizing tendencies of modern medicine and sexual health discourses. Interestingly, such discourses are developed, in part, in Anzaldúa's writings on the sixteenth-century Spanish mystic, St. Teresa of Ávila, whose own life and writings have also been analyzed in terms of their relevance for disability studies (Cf. Juárez-Almendros 2017). Thus, the paper concludes by arguing that Anzaldúa's figuration of Teresa, along with her analysis of feminine figures from within Nahua creation stories, offer a distinctive approach based on the colonial history of *mestizaje* in the Americas, which reconfigures historiographical explorations of "American Philosophy." Through this invocation of mestizaje, a Spanish word generally referring to the reproductive, racial, and cultural "mixture" between Spanish and Indigenous communities across the Americas, Anzaldúa creates an account of "crip futurity" in the Americas as a site of both contestation and potentiality.[2] That imagining and working toward disability futurity is not without its own risks, but it is, I argue, a possible horizon that remembers the wounds of the modern/colonial past without promising a curative future.

Remembering Anzaldúa

Anzaldúa deployed a number of evolving neologisms throughout her career that gave shape to the contours of her ontological, epistemological, aesthetic, and political views. Among them, Anzaldúa is likely most widely known for her development of *mestiza consciousness*. As a characterization of an "'alien' consciousness" of the border regions—i.e., geographical, gendered, racialized, linguistic, economic, moral, etc.—Anzaldúa drew from the history of the Spanish colonization of the Americas, and Mexico, in particular, to frame the violent *choques*/clashes between differing cultures, peoples, ideas, and embodied ways of being (Anzaldúa 1999, 100). These choques also gave rise to competing value systems and alliances, leading to both oppressor and oppressed relationalities. Harkening to the Mexican nation-state's own retelling of the mythic origins of a uniquely "mixed" people, Anzaldúa cites twentieth-century Mexican philosopher and politician José Vansconcelos (1882–1959). At the beginning of the chapter titled "*La conciencia de la mestiza*/Towards a New Consciousness," Anzaldúa reconfigures a phrase written in 1921 by Vasconcelos to distinguish the coat of arms for the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México: "Por mi raza hablará el espíritu/The spirit will speak through my race" (Miller 2004, 27). Anzaldúa's "take off" (to use her own words) of Vasconcelos' phrase is "Por la mujer de mi raza, hablará el espíritu/The spirit will speak through the woman of my race" (Anzaldúa 1999, 99.). A number of scholars have examined Anzaldúa's intertextual reference to Vasconcelos, including her familiarity with the history of Mexican philosophy (Alessandri and Stehn 2020; Miller 2004; Pitts 2014). However, for the purposes of this

chapter, it is important to analyze Anzaldúa's conception of mestizaje, including her reference to Vasconcelos, as a pivotal method for discussing impurity and the forms of moral, political, and social complicity that living within border spaces entails.

To clarify, for Vasconcelos, *mestizaje* was the articulation of a "cosmic" future that would result from cultural, racial, aesthetic, and political forms of mixture. Specifically, in *La raza cósmica/The Cosmic Race* (1925), Vasconcelos outlines the history of Latin America in terms of the racial mixture between European, Amerindian, African, and Asian peoples throughout the Americas. He argues against prevailing Eurocentric articulations of evolutionary and societal development of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that miscegenation, and thus racial and cultural mixture, is generative, and not degenerative. Unlike views of the racial mixture at the time, inspired by Herbert Spencer's account of social development that considered hybridity a form of "mongrel" biological degeneracy (Young 1995, 17), Vasconcelos considered the heterogeneity of racial mixture in the Americas a sign of progress, strength, and beauty. Notably, Vasconcelos wrote of a "cosmic race" that would result from the mixture of the best characteristics of distinct racial groups, now living together in Latin America, due to the unique colonial history and environmental conditions of the region (i.e., "hot climate favors relations among all peoples and their unification") (Vasconcelos [1925] 2011, 72). In this, Vasconcelos' view of mestizaje proposes a vision of beauty, harmony, and power developing through racial mixture, a view that still, however, retains an endorsement of explicitly anti-Black aesthetic and intellectual values. He writes, for example, that the "ugliest breeds will gradually give way to the most beautiful," and he places the physical features of African-descended peoples as those most likely doomed to evolutionary erasure (Ibid., 79). Additionally, romanticizing and exoticizing Blackness, Vasconcelos suggests that the "spiritual" and "sensual" features of Black peoples in the Americas will comprise some of the positive valences of the new "cosmic race" (Ibid., 66; 79).

Based on this notion of mestizaje, it may seem surprising that Anzaldúa would turn to Vasconcelos' work to preface a feminist account of "new mestiza consciousness," an account that is meant to address the violence of colonization in the Americas. Moreover, framing Vasconcelos' eugenic project from a disability lens would suggest that this form of aesthetic and evolutionary perfectionism seeks to eradicate morphological, psychological, and cognitive ways of being that are often considered human "impairments."[3] In light of this, then, readers are drawn to the question of why Anzaldúa would want to "take off" from such a harmful starting point. To better address this question, readers can turn to the relationship between Vasconcelos' conception of mestizaje and the Chicano rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s, in which Anzaldúa participated. That is, Chicano rights activists and organizations of the

second half of the twentieth century embraced Vasconcelos' account of the mestizaje and *The Cosmic Race*. The book and his framing of *la raza* were framed by Chicanos in the United States, according to Grace Marilyn Miller, as a form of "cultural and racial vindication" (Miller 2004, 36). *La raza*, framed through Vasconcelian mestizaje, was a valorization of the mixture of cultures, racial features, and the geographic reality of the border regions that many Mexican Americans experienced. Thus, it is no surprise, given Anzaldúa's work with Chicano rights organizations, such as the Chicano Youth Organization, the Chicano literary arts magazine, *Tejidos*, as well as her liaison work while in South Bend, Indiana between migrant farmworkers and public schools, that she would have read and understood the relevance of Vasconcelos' work for Chicanos in the United States.

Yet, Anzaldúa's invocation of Vasconcelos is not a simple reappropriation for the purpose of honoring the prophetic vision of Vasconcelian mestizaje. Rather, as Miller has argued, Anzaldúa's revision or *misreading* of Vasconcelos was quite significant (Ibid., 37). While Vasconcelos' vision was prefaced on a hierarchy of beauty and intelligence that gave primacy to European civilizations, Anzaldúa's conception of mestizaje requires operating from a "pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good, the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned" (Anzaldúa 1999, 101). This vision, while retaining the productivity, creativity, and futurity of the mixture, is not perfectionist, at least not in Vasconcelos' sense. Anzaldúa's account of mestiza consciousness is situated within the history and ongoing presence of sexual assault, colonization, anti-Black racism, and cultural conflicts that characterize the existence of many Chicanx communities in the United States, as well as any peoples in the Americas birthed from within conditions of violence. She writes:

> *Pero es difícil* differentiating between lo heredado, los adquirido, lo impuesto. [The new mestiza] puts history through a sieve, winnows out the lies, looks at the forces that we as a race, as women, have been part of. *Luego bota lo que no vale, los desmientos, los desencuentos, el embrutecimiento. Aguarda el juicio, hondo y enracízado, de la gente antigua.* This step is a conscious rupture with all oppressive traditions of all cultures and religions. She communicates that rupture, documents the struggle. She reinterprets history and, using new symbols, she shapes new myths. She adopts new perspectives toward the darkskinned, women and queers. She strengthens her tolerance (and intolerance) for ambiguity.
>
> (Anzaldúa 1999, 104)

In this passage, her readers may note a form of moral and/or political perfectionism within her account of mestizaje, a utopian image of a future without oppression. Yet, this account of mestizaje is less rooted

in a particular morphology or even specific embodiment, but rather in a reorientation to history and the symbolic shaping of meaning. This account acknowledges individual participation within structuring networks of oppression ("the forces that we ... have been part of") and thereby cleaves open the complicity with systems of violence. Vasconcelos' work, with its prophetic tone of harmony and overcoming, does not include this moral/political limitation and an understanding of the ongoing character of such moral/political ambiguity.

Such an account of moral/political complicity with systems of oppression, and an emphasis on rewriting history—both collective and personal accounts of history—remain prominent themes throughout Anzaldúa's oeuvre. While her valorization of mestizaje is questioned by Indigenous scholars and authors within Indigenous studies in the 2000s (Miranda and Keating 2002; Smith 2011) and has led to an ongoing dialogue on the harms and potential for solidarity between Indigenous feminists and Chicana feminists, her later work maintains a stance on the impurity—"the good, the bad and the ugly"—of coalitional struggle. One significant concept developed in her middle and late writings, including her dissertation writings just before her death in the early 2000s, is the concept of "nos/otras." The term is constructed by placing a slash—or *rajadura* (to use Anzaldúa's terminology for this concept) between the Spanish-language word "nosotras" ("us" in the feminine form) to split *nos* (us) from *otras* (them) (Anzaldúa 2015, 79). Themes building on la rajadura appear throughout Anzaldúa's writings, and offer, as she states in her late dissertation writings,

> a perspective from the cracks and a way to reconfigure ourselves as subjects outside binary oppositions, outside existing dominant relations. By disrupting binary oppositions that reinforce relations of subordination and dominance, nos/otras suggests position of being simultaneously insider/outsider, internal/external exile ... We are both subject and object, self and other, haves and have-nots, conqueror and conquered, oppressor and oppressed.
>
> (Ibid.)

In this way, nos/otras becomes a way to symbolically explore an intersubjective positionality that seeks to interrogate those "fissures," "cracks," and splits that distinguish group identities and that preface the need for distinct namings, groupings, and political alliances. She writes "we are mutually complicitous," and to become *una nepantlera*—one who navigates the cracks and boundaries—allows one to resist the "nationalistic isolationism" that seeks to separate and silo people from forms of collective organizing and shared meaning-making (Ibid., 82).

Among such collective projects, as she names in *Borderlands/La frontera*, is reinterpreting history and developing new shared "myths" that

can guide work aimed at ending structural oppressions. Within her middle writings, Anzaldúa begins developing a concept called the *Coyolxauhqui imperative,* named after the feminine figure within the Nahua creation story of the moon. According to the *Florentine Codex*—a sixteenth-century study of Mexica/Aztec cosmology carried out under the direction of a Franciscan priest, Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, and a team of Nahua scribes—Coyolxauhqui is the daughter of Coatlicue, who is depicted as the earth-mother with a serpent skirt. The story suggests that, one day, Coatlicue was sweeping the temple of Coatepec and found some hummingbird feathers and placed them in the sash of her belt (Ibid.). The feathers, as some scholars have noted, symbolize "divine semen," and from these feathers, Coatlicue became pregnant with a child, Huitzilopochtli, who was rumored to bring war with him (Carrasco 2012, 73). Upon hearing this, Coyolxauhqui, worried about the oncoming of war, informed her brothers, the stars, and, together, they planned to kill Coatlicue before the birth of Huitzilopochtli. Coatlicue received word of this plan and feared for her life. Likewise, Huitzilopochtli while in Coatlicue's womb hears of Coyolxauhqui's plan. When Coyolxauhqui approaches Coatepec, where Coatlicue resided, Huitzilopochtli emerged from Coatlicue as a fully grown adult and defeats both the star army and Coyolxauhqui. The manner in which Coyolxauhqui is killed is significant in that Huitzilopochtli cuts off her head and limbs, and tosses her head into the sky, where it remains as the moon to comfort her mother Coatlicue. Her dismembered body is then tossed to the bottom of the Coatepec hill.

Anzaldúa's writings demonstrate that she was well aware of this creation story, and, in her middle and late writings, she developed a perspective on history and narration that incorporated this image of Coyolxauhqui, as a dismembered and reconfigured feminine figuration from Nahua worldviews. Although the historiographical decision to locate the Mexica/Aztec Empire of Tenochtitlan as the symbolic center of Mexico's Indigenous past was a result of the post-revolutionary framings of Indigenismo and mestizaje made by nineteenth- and twentieth-century Mexican politicians, historians, and social theorists, Anzaldúa also explores this specific set of creation stories. For her, the normative force of the Coyolxauhqui story is one of the destruction of a powerful woman at the hands of her brother, and the story of such a woman being remembered, that is, reconfigured into a celestial body that retains power and significance. Readers of Anzaldúa's framing of Coyolxauhqui note that this figuration of Coyolxauhqui as a powerful Indigenous woman torn apart by another harkens to colonial conquest and the continued marginalization and violence that Indigenous women and Chicanas face (Luna and Galeana 2016, 16). Moreover, Huitzilopochtli's killing of Coyolxauhqui, the story of a brother killing a sister, likely registered to many Chicanas who were battling with sexism and erasure within the Chicano rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Ibid., 17).

More than this, however, Anzaldúa's story of Coyolxauhqui is the story of recreation and generativity from conditions of violence and the possibility for creating oneself and one's community anew through storytelling and narrative. In "Let us be the healing of the wound: The Coyolxauhqui imperative—la sombra y el sueño" (2002), she describes the Coyolxauhqui imperative as "[t]he path of the artist, the creative impulse ... basically an attempt to heal the wounds" (2002, 292). She also writes of the context of the falling of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. She writes "The day the towers fell, me sentí como Coyolxauhqui, la luna" (Ibid., 303). Elsewhere in the essay, she states:

> The Coyolxauhqui imperative is to heal and achieve integration. When fragmentations occur you fall apart and feel as though you've been expelled from paradise. Coyolxauhqui is my symbol for the necessary process of dismemberment and fragmentation, of seeing that self or the situations you're embroiled in differently. It is also my symbol for reconstruction and reframing, one that allows for putting the pieces together in a new way. The Coyolxau[h]qui imperative is an ongoing process of making and unmaking. There is never any resolution, just the process of healing.
>
> (Ibid., 313)

In this sense, the Coyolxauhqui imperative is a dynamic and open-ended process that is never fully resolved or concluded. Placing this concept in relation to her framings of mestiza consciousness and nos/otras thereby suggests an ongoing task of addressing moral/political divisions and conflict, and which seeks an end to suffering, violence, and harm, but, as an ever-unfolding process, that will never be complete.

Theorizing Disability through Anzaldúa's Corpus

Before *Borderlands/La frontera*, Anzaldúa had already conducted important authorial and editorial work. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981) was a touchstone anthology, comprised of Black, Indigenous, Chicana, Latina, and Asian American women writers. Edited by Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga, this work sought to demonstrate the differing positionalities, struggles, and histories of women of color writers in the United States, and sought to bring together a collective project of transformation through shared stories and experiences. Additionally, Anzaldúa had been publishing poems, essays, and short stories throughout the 1970s, many of which touched on themes of history, colorism, anti-Indigeneity among Chicanx communities, and embodied experiences of menstruation, pain, illness, and medical intervention. For example, in "La Prieta," an autobiographical piece published in *This Bridge Called My Back,* Anzaldúa begins by writing of her grandmother's inspection of her body as a newborn,

looking for "signs of lo indio, or worse, of mulatto blood," and her mother's pleas for her to stay out of the sun so as not to be mistaken "for an Indian" (Anzaldúa [1981] 2009, 38). In this same piece, Anzaldúa writes of chronic fevers, intestinal infections, fibroids, chills, and spasms that are the result of an endocrine condition (Ibid., 43). She notes that when seeking medical guidance, "The doctor played with his knife. La Chingada ripped open, raped with the white man's wand" (Ibid.). Commenting here on the hysterectomy she experienced in 1980, she describes her "bowels fucked with a surgeon's knife, uterus and ovaries pitched into the trash" (Ibid.). These images suggest the violence of medical intervention and the callousness through which she experienced her body at the hands of surgeons and doctors. She also builds on conceptions of disease in this piece, connecting it to complicity with oppression among communities of color. She writes:

> I see Third World peoples and women not as oppressors but as accomplices to oppression by unwittingly passing on to our children and our friends the oppressor's ideologies. I cannot discount the role I play as accomplice, that we all play as accomplices, for we are not screaming loud enough in protest. The disease of powerlessness thrives in my body, not just out there in society. And just as the use of gloves, masks, and disinfectants fails to kill this disease, government grants, equal rights opportunity programs, welfare, and food stamps fail to uproot racism, sexism, and homophobia. And tokenism is not the answer. Sharing the pie is not going to work. I had a bite of it once and it almost poisoned me. With mutations of the virus such as these, one cannot isolate the virus and treat it. The whole organism is poisoned.
>
> (2009, 48)

Drawing on a notion of disease, virus, and poison, Anzaldúa responds to neoliberal forms of inclusionism, and specifically rights-based responses to structural harms. Such metaphors of illness, disease, and contagion have long been used to describe social problems (Sontag 1978), and, here, Anzaldúa relies on such a framing as well. Such metaphors reinforce what Mitchell and Snyder call "disability as narrative prosthesis," which can include, as it does among critical race and feminist discourses, the view that

> biological inferiority [must] be exposed as a construction of discursive power. Formerly denigrated identities are "rescued" by understanding gendered, racial, and sexual differences as textually produced, distancing them from the "real" of physical or cognitive aberrancy projected onto their figures.
>
> (Mitchell and Snyder 2000, 3)

In other words, positioning racism, sexism, and other oppressions in a metaphorical relation to disease and illness, distances these forms of societal divestment and denigration from perceived forms of "actual" disease, illness, and impairment. While Anzaldúa's remarks on her experiences with medical providers describe the trauma inflicted on her, her work does not directly address the relationship between medical institutions and the societal oppressions that she describes as "poisoning the whole organism," and thus positions illness/poisoning as a narrative prosthesis.

Later in her writings, however, Anzaldúa does directly address questions of disability, including her relationship to identifying as disabled. Specifically, in a published email exchange that took place between late 2003 and early 2004, just months before her death, AnaLouise Keating writes to ask Anzaldúa some questions that have arisen in the context of a course that she was teaching at the time. One of Keating's students, Carrie McMaster, who is researching "the intersections between disability studies & [Anzaldúa's] work" asks whether Anzaldúa would "claim 'disabled' as an identity (as she claimed 'woman,' 'Chicana,' 'lesbian,' and 'feminist')" (Anzaldúa 2009, 299). The student also asks whether "people with disabilities [are] among those apt to become nepantleras" (Ibid.). Anzaldúa's reply is that she is "happy to be read in any of the disciplinary studies," but that she does not identify as "disabled." She writes:

> Though I don't identify as disabled or as diabetic (preferring to say that I have disabilities & that I struggle with diabetes), you are free & have the right to identify me however you want. I believe in free dialogue & abhor academic censorship of any kind, especially that which seeks to 'protect' me or 'my' image.
>
> (Ibid., 299–300)

She also writes that the identity "disabled" "would reduce [her] to an even more partial identity than chicana, feminist, queer, & any other genetic/cultural slices-of-the-pie terms do" (Ibid., 300). Lastly, in her email, she notes that she does not "feel distanced" from disability and that she does not "deny or reject the fact that [she is] disabled in some manner" (Ibid.). Regarding her statement that identifying as "disabled" "would reduce" her in some way, Keating (and McMaster) follow up with Anzaldúa asking for clarification. Keating states that she is hoping to read against the interpretation that Anzaldúa was implying that "'disabled' was somehow a lesser label" than other identity categories (Ibid., 301). Anzaldúa's response was never sent, but was drafted shortly after receiving the message. Keating chose to publish this unfinished message to offer Anzaldúa's potential reply. Anzaldúa writes in the draft that a

> disabled category is a particular form of 'Otherness;' all such western notions of 'Otherness' are exclusive and hierarchical, and tend to

> homogenize, deface, and compress a large number of people under one particular form of 'Otherness,' allowing issues of class, cultural diversity, ethnicity, and gender to be ignored. Grouping people with different experiences of oppression and privilege results in the loss of identity, power, and agency.
>
> (Ibid., 301–302)

Her comments here echo the work of a number of theorists and activists of color working within disability studies. For example, Christopher Bell's work on Blackness and disability underscores the way in which disability among African American communities is often "relegated to the margins," and he notes how historians and critical race theorists rarely refer to people like Harriet Tubman, Emmett Till, and James Byrd as disabled, despite the historical record of disabilities present within their archives (2011, 3). Moreover, Bell critiques the whiteness of disability studies, and its ongoing development despite failures to address issues of race and ethnicity (2006).

Bell's insights also include an important layer of analysis regarding the political stakes of disability critique. He writes that the ableist and white dimensions that structure a great deal of critical race theory and disability studies support a form of "body politic" that maintains the separation between Blackness and disability. His work and those of others examining the relationships between race and disability, he argues, "requires a willingness to deconstruct the systems that would keep those bodies in separate spheres…[and to uncover] the misrepresentations of black, disabled bodies and the missed opportunities to think about how those bodies transform(ed) systems and culture" (2011, 3–4). In this, Bell develops in reference to Blackness and disability what Anzaldúa appears to refer to as "slices-of-the-pie terms" with respect to her own identities. That is, as she states in "La Prieta" (1981), that rights-based discourses that relegate different claims for state protection—i.e., racial discrimination, disability accommodations, sexual harassment, etc.—maintain stark distinctions between racist, ableist, and sexist forms of harm experienced by people of color.

This explains why Anzaldúa notes in 1981 that "tokenism is not the answer [and] sharing the pie is not going to work" ([1981] 2009, 48). Read in this light, Anzaldúa's disidentification with "disabled"—despite affirming McMaster's reading that "those of us with disabilities who survive are apt to display la facultad [an awareness of the interconnectedness of the world developed by inhabiting border regions] and may choose to function as nepantleras"—suggests what Mitchell and Snyder refer to as *ablenationalism* (Anzaldúa 2009, 300). Regarding ablenationalism, Mitchell and Snyder argue that "disability integration in postindustrial countries is now complete and a preeminent sign of their successful arrival at modernity" (2015, 35). As part of a neoliberal landscape of inclusion, ablenationalism names "the use of disability

by nations and multinational corporate/charity industries as a basis for promoting American exceptionalism abroad," while simultaneously endorsing an assimilationist and normalizing trajectory for those people who are brought under protections by the state (Ibid., 35–36; 43). Mitchell and Snyder argue:

> rights-based minority model approaches tend to further entrench the very institutions and value systems that marginalize them in the first place. They inevitable become complicit in the sedimentation of some populations into a zone of expendability in order to salvage an idea of a subset of enabled minority subjects as fitting into heteronormative modes of belonging.
>
> (Ibid., 44)

Based on this political critique, Anzaldúa's unease with adding the "disabled" identity labels to herself may be explained by a refusal to relegate some people as "disabled" and others not, especially as such identifications help strengthen the state's own image of itself as inclusive and accommodating. Along such lines, Mitchell and Snyder propose, as do Bell, Morales, McRuer, and other activists/scholars working on the relationship between race, ethnicity, and disability, that:

> A critique of ablenationalism must draw upon identifications born of shared predicaments of exclusion and isolation while also allowing ways of revaluing the demographics of disability as counterinsurgent opportunities for resistance based on existences in peripheral embodiments.
>
> (Ibid., 47)

It is for these reasons that McRuer finds Anzaldúa's commitments in *Borderlands/La frontera* as developing a queer crip dedication to "The squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half-dead: in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the 'normal'" (McRuer 2006, 39, quoting Anzaldúa 1999, 25). These alliances and affiliations among those who experience "peripheral embodiments" also help explain why Anzaldúa invokes Vasconcelian mestizaje, given the denigration of "mongrel" categories that Vasconcelos was responding to in the early twentieth century.

St. Teresa and Holy Relics of the Americas

Framed in this way, Anzaldúa's 1980 poem, "Holy Relics" appears, alongside her critical remarks on institutional medicine in *La Prieta* (1981), as a potential early place in her corpus to find disability critique. The poem was originally published in a lesbian-focused literary journal, *Conditions*.

that highlighted a great deal of work by women of color and working-class women. The poem traces the disinterment of the body of St. Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582). The stanzas outline the removal of her corpse from the convent at Alba de Tormes by religious authorities, the myth that her body did not decompose while entombed and retained a sweet, honeysuckle or jasmine odor, and of the dismemberment of Teresa's body, limbs, organs, and pieces distributed as holy relics, before returning the remains of her corpse to its original burial site at Alba de Tormes.

There are a number of reasons why Teresa's life and death may have resonated with Anzaldúa. First, Anzaldúa appears to have been familiar with Teresa's writings. Her personal library contained copies of Teresa's autobiography, *The Life of Teresa of Jesus* (in English) and *Castillo interior/The Interior Castle* (in separate Spanish and English editions).[4] Additionally, while "Holy Relics" depicts historical events following the saint's death, Anzaldúa's later dissertation writings quote Teresa's 1577 work *The Interior Castle, or the Mansions,* naming Teresa's phrase "'mansions' of self" to contextualize a discussion of nepantla—"an in-between space" that appears to have evolved from her earlier notion of mestiza consciousness. Anzaldúa's writings contain numerous references to mystical writings across a number of religious traditions, and she also invokes *curanderas* and "folk healers" as well. Bridging the relationship between embodied and spiritual well-being, Anzaldúa's writings, according to Theresa Delgadillo, consider spirituality distinct from organized, institutional religions (Delgadillo 2011, 3). Moreover, her use of spiritual imagery and iconography often refer to sensuous, embodied forms of transformation and "relation to the sacred" (Ibid.). In this, Teresa's life and writings would appear rife with introspective engagement about self-transformation, spiritual and sexual pleasure, and, as I suggest below, about a form of "peripheral embodiment" that frames her through a disability lens.

Regarding the relationship between spirituality and sexuality, Teresa's autobiographical writings detail her experiences of what most interpreters since the nineteenth century onward have described either as "hysteria," or, according to more recent analyses, a neurological condition known as "ecstatic epilepsy" (Juárez-Almendros 2017, 117, cf. Arias 2019; Garía-Albea 2003). Ecstatic epilepsy, as described in a recent neurology journal, "is characterised by recurrence of a special type of epileptic seizure that modifies the patient's mood and affect; patients experience intense feelings of pleasure, wellness, peace, beauty, and plenitude, occasionally with religious connotations" (Arias 2019). As Encarnación Juárez-Almendros notes, a scholar of disability in early modern Spain:

> In *The Book of Her Life* [Teresa's autobiography] Teresa de Ávila speaks of frequent corporeal pains, convulsions, stomach problems, dizziness, loss of consciousness, and strong emotional fluctuations involving mystical graces, involuntary and uncontrollable raptures, beatific and diabolical visions, hearing voices and prophetic messages.
>
> (2017, 117)

Juárez-Almendros also states that, during her lifetime, epilepsy had been specifically associated with "woman and demonic temptations" (Ibid.). For example, between the late fifteenth and early seventeenth centuries, there are Spanish medical writings that associate epilepsy with "the suffocation of the uterus" and "an incomplete purge of flames in the uterus" (Ibid., 118). Juárez-Almendros argues that, much like today,

> the symptomatology of this neurological condition [was] stigmatized and dangerous, because it stirred the suspicions of patriarchal institutions at a time characterized by inflexible religious orthodoxy and by a meticulous scrutiny of the body considered to be a place of intense pleasures and of diabolic invasions marked by convulsions.
>
> (Ibid.)

Such a relationship to her body, pleasure, and religious fervor made her appear dangerous to the established order of the Catholic church at the time. Notably, both she and her grandfather, Juan Sánchez, had been confronted by the Spanish Inquisition on separate occasions. Juan Sánchez was a Jewish merchant who converted to Christianity in the fifteenth century, and he and his descendants became known as *conversos.* In 1485, he was arrested and convicted for practicing Judaism (which included his confession to heresy and apostasy), and he was forced to pay a fine and undergo, along with his son, Alonso de Cepeda, who would become Teresa's father (then six years old), public humiliation as punishment (Mujica 2016, 30). Accusations were also presented to the Inquisition against Teresa during her lifetime, and her many years of attempting to reform the monastery resulted in a number of allegations made against her. Yet, by 1579, and due to her epistolary dialogue with King Phillip II, all charges against her were formally dismissed. Her grandfather, father, and uncles also sought out *pleitos de hidalguía,* a formal document that could be purchased by wealthy converso families to demonstrate their gentility and *limpieza de sangre* (Bilinkoff 2014, 64–65). In these ways, as Barbara Mujica argues, Teresa's family lived under immense pressure to prove their nobility and to deny their Jewish roots. Moreover, Ávila, during her lifetime was "a burgeoning city, a magnet for immigrants of different social classes [, and a] growing group of 'new men' [conversos]—wealthy but non-noble merchants, financiers, notaries, and doctors—sought increasing influence, challenging the established oligarchy and producing social tension" (Mujica 2016, 31). Notably, Teresa does not emphasize her Jewish or converso roots in her

autobiography, and although she was aware of the local persecution of her family in Ávila (between 1519 and 1522, her father and three uncles were charged with failing to pay taxes due to their lack of status as *hidalgos* or "nobles" due to being conversos), she does not write about these events. Mujica proposes several reasons why this may have been the case. First, given that, when composing her autobiography, Teresa was already under suspicion as a heretic due to her ecstatic visions and experiences, as well as her reform efforts within the Catholic Carmelite order, openly discussing her family's Jewish ancestry would have placed her under even greater scrutiny at the time (Mujica 2016, 31). Also, writing her autobiography was, at the command of one of her spiritual directors, García de Toledo, an exercise in proving her devoutness and piety. Here again, noting her converso and Jewish ancestry would have hampered those ends (Ibid.).

Regarding the historiography of Teresa, Corinne Blackmer argues that Teresa became remembered, from the seventeenth century onward, as a "queer icon," including dedications by queer authors such as Richard Crashaw, Ronald Firbank, Gertrude Stein, and Vita Sackville-West (Blackmer 1995). Notably, Anzaldúa owned a copy of Sackville-West's *The Eagle and the Dove: A Study in Contrasts: St. Teresa of Avila, St. Thérèse of Lisieux* (1973) and dedicates the poem "Holy Relics" to "Judy Grahn and V. Sackville-West." In fact, Anzaldúa owned a number of works by both authors, and the significance of this dedication speaks perhaps to a potential reading of the Spanish mystic as a figuration for queer crip critique. That is, both authors of the dedication, as well as Teresa's life and works, functioned in the service of rejecting the pathologization of sexuality and gender. Grahn's book of collected poems, of which Anzaldúa owned two copies, *The Work of a Common Woman: The Collected Poetry of Judy Grahn, 1964–1977* (1978; 1982), begins with a work by Grahn titled "The Psychoanalysis of Edward the Dyke." This poem is a satire of homophobia and transphobia within clinical psychiatry based on an exchange between a patient, Edward, and their psychoanalyst, Dr. Knox. Passages of the piece, as Catherine Irwin (2019) has recently argued, offer a number of themes relevant to queer and trans critique:

> first, it marks a period in LGBTQ history when the clinical establishment defined homosexuality and transsexuality as a mental illness or "disease"; second, it provides a satirical rendition of the clinical establishment's insight into infinite desires and polymorphous sexuality through its comical representation of Dr. Knox's "scientific" knowledge about sexual pleasure and gender; and, finally, it highlights the cultural investment in heteronormative and capitalistic frameworks that depend upon the binary of sexual difference and the disavowal of queer pleasure.
>
> (71)

In these ways, Grahn explores, through this exchange, a critical lens on the medicalization of sexuality and gender, as well as the violence that such clinical practices engender. For example, at one point in the piece, Edward recounts being harassed and assaulted in a women's restroom by "three middle-aged housewives," and then having shots fired at them by police while Edward is trying to escape from the restroom (Grahn 2019, 77–78).

Also within this same collection of Grahn's work is a poem titled "A Woman Is Talking to Death" in which Grahn describes working as a nurse's aide in a military hospital, and recounts the differential treatment given to patients there. She also describes the wounds and maiming done to soldiers treated at the hospital, a critical stance that harkens to contemporary disability analyses of the role of military violence within processes of debilitation, ablenationalism, and disablization (Puar 2017; Mitchell and Snyder 2015; Erevelles 2011). This poem by Grahn and her more contemporary works have also been analyzed in terms of the pathologization of oppressed groups through mental health systems (Rust 2015).

Sackville-West's work is also known for its commentary on the medicalization and pathologization of sexuality and gender. The author lived during a period in which the emerging field of sexology was developing specific articulations of gender and sexual types, such as "the invert" and "the interdeterminate sex" (Johnston 2004, 128). Sackville-West often used this terminology in their memoirs to describe themself, and writes of their desires as "unnatural" and "perverted" (Ibid.). They also describe the need to write the "truth" about themself and their sexual desires. Sackville-West remained in a heterosexual marriage throughout their life and had sexual relationships with women, including a long-term relationship with Violet Keppel. While often presenting in women's clothing, Sackville-West was also known to dress in men's clothing and to walk openly in the streets of Paris with Keppel, referring to themself as "Julian" (Ibid., 133). Moreover, in the novel *Challenge*, of which Anzaldúa owned a copy, Sackville-West depicts a heterosexual relationship between "Julian" and "Eve," characters who stand in for Sackville-West and Keppel. In this novel, literary scholars have noted that the theme of "inversion," writing the "inner self" as masculine in the character of Julian is likely due to the influence of sexology discourses of the period, such as those of Havelock Ellis (Ibid.).

Given these dedications at the opening of Anzaldúa's poem, readers can approach her depiction of St. Teresa of Ávila's disinterment and dismemberment in two novel ways. First, her poem can be read as an illustration of the harms of medicalization. Teresa's body, while both living and dead, was under constant scrutiny, for piety, for marks of "impure" blood, and for her spiritual and healing powers, all of which were documented in exacting detail. Anzaldúa explores such themes in

the poem. For example, one stanza details a "witness's" description of the corpse. Her posture, color, hair condition, eye moisture, and scent are all listed as qualities of "the body" (Anzaldúa 1999, 179). Also, her body is depicted as harshly controlled by men in positions of authority after her death, being removed from the convent in which she was initially buried. Anzaldúa describes a priest giving "a sharp twist snapping of two fingers," and others "plucking three ribs," "auction[ing] tiny pieces of her fingernails," and that "scraps of her bones they sold/ to the aristocracy for money" (Ibid., 180). This scene, coupled with the poem's dedications to Sackville-West and Grahn, suggests a fetishization of the body and a desire for its dismemberment. That is, Teresa's body, torn apart for its assumed spiritual powers by religious authorities and devotees, may also be a depiction of the pulling apart, categorization, or "dismemberment" of the human body-mind[5] within the medical sciences, themes which both Grahn and Sackville-West explore in differing ways.

With respect to this reading of St. Teresa of Ávila as a text that interrogates the relationship between disability and "American philosophy," we can then look to Anzaldúa's figuration of Teresa in relation to the Coyolxauhqui imperative. Recall that "Holy Relics" is not the only place where Anzaldúa explores themes of dismemberment, and the Coyolxauhqui story, as well as Anzaldúa's "imperative" offered to readers in her later works, attests to a form of "remembering" through storytelling, myth-making, and "an ongoing process of making and unmaking" (Anzaldúa 2002, 313). As such, we can recall the framings of nos/otras and mestizaje explored above. Spanish colonization is part of the history of the Americas, including the settler nation of what is now the United States and its border regions. As a process of remembering that brings together "the good, the bad and the ugly," Anzaldúa turns to the spiritual traditions of both Spain and the Aztec/Mexica empire. In both cases, powerful feminine figures were torn apart and later revered for their roles in the reconstruction of self and narrative possibility for Anzaldúa. Along these lines, she repeats a refrain in "Holy Relics" that reads:

> We are the holy relics,
> the scattered bones of a saint,
> the best loved bones of Spain.
> We seek each other.
>
> (Anzaldúa 1999, 176)

The "we" here is ambiguous, although surely the dedication to queer writers struggling against pathologization and fragmentation was a part of this collective naming. Yet, for her readers, those who encountered her work in *Conditions* or through *Borderlands/La frontera*, in which the poem was reprinted, their framings may include situatedness within the United States. As Anthony Lioi notes of the Teresa/Coyolxauhqui relationship in Anzaldúa's work:

> in Teresa/Coyolxauhqui, Aztec and Spanish history, Catholicism and indigenous religion fuse, are separated, and "seek each other." There is no utopian future, no fantasy of restored unity. Teresa is really dead; Coyolxauhqui does not re-member herself in a moment outside of history. Instead, their pieces remain distinct by connected, broken but holy, moving toward communion in a future they will shape together.
>
> (2008, 96)

This reading of Teresa and Coyolxauhqui together, "broken but holy" can be woven into the narrative of "broken body-minds," to use Eli Clare's phrase (2017, 23). Clare, in his critique of cure narratives and curative trajectories:

> Cure dismisses resilience, survival, the spider web of fractures, cracks, and seams. Its promise holds power precisely because none of us want to be broken. But I'm curious: what might happen if we were to accept, claim, embrace our brokenness?
>
> (Ibid., 160)

Clare's words of "fractures, cracks, and seams" thus harken Anzaldúa's borderlands, the fracturing that she explores, through history, through medical institutions, through state violence, and through being torn apart by others. In this, Anzaldúa asks us to look at the fractured, violent past and present of the Americas, and rather than seeking wholeness or cure, she offers a way forward that "accepts, claims, and embraces" the brokenness of those who will inhabit that future.

Notes

1 Cf. Alessandri and Stehn (2020); McKenna and Pratt (2015); Pappas (2011).
2 The term "crip futurity" stems from Alison Kafer's *Feminist Queer Crip* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).
3 Here, I am following a line of disability critique that denaturalizes the relationship between impairment and disability. For more on such an approach, see Tremain (2017).
4 Anzaldúa's personal library is housed in the Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers at the Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Austin. Many thanks to Mariana Alessandri for pointing out these books in Anzaldúa's personal library.
5 This term is derived from Clare (2017).

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10 The Right to Heal

Politics, Civil Rights, and the Need for New Ethical Concepts Regarding Regenerative Medical Care in Orthopedics

Tommy J. Curry

On February 4, 2014, the United States government decided that h
stem cells were in fact drugs. In the United States v. Regenerativ
ences, the U.S. Court of Appeals of the District of Columbia d
that the removal of adult mesenchymal stem cells from bone m
draws and their subsequent culturing, which includes the use of d
cline to prevent bacterial infection, is in fact a mixture which qu
as a drug under the Food and Drug Cosmetic Act of 1938.[1] Som
scholars suggested that the court's decision was *fait accompli*. R
Epstein for instance explains that the Food and Drug Administr
changing of the "The FDA's original 1998 regulations dealin
cellular and tissue-based products (Human Cells, Tissues, and C
and Tissue-Based Products, or HCT/P's) covered only those tran
human cells or tissues 'into another human'—so-called allogeneic
fers, as opposed to the autologous transfers at issue in the Regene
cedure," created a self-fulling logics that allowed the federal gover
the power to create and define a language to include previously unk
technologies under twentieth-century notions of drugs (Epstein 20
In 2005, the FDA expanded 21 CFR 1271 to include autol
procedures. As Epstein continues, "the newer 2005 definition—
was adopted without notice or hearing—vastly expands the scope
regulation to cover all 'articles containing or consisting of huma
or tissues that are intended for implantation, transplantation, inf
or transfer into a human recipient,' so that the risks from autol
transfers are treated on a par with those from allogeneic tra
(2013, 4). The redefining of title 21 of the Code of Federal Regul
(CFR) to align with the interest the FDA has in regulating new m
technologies allowed the courts to easily subsume medical inno
under legalese that could never imagine these advances.

The debates over the use of stem cells for medical treatmen
been a source of national and academic debate for some time. Ho
on the academic front, there has been little nuance amongst b
cists concerning the difference between embryonic stem cells an