"Because I Am in All Cultures at the Same Time"[1]: Intersections of Gloria Anzaldúa's Concept of Mestizaje in the Writings of Latin-American Jewish Women

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As a woman who consistently confronts institutionalized racism, class exploitation, and homophobia, Gloria Anzaldúa insists on illuminating multiple systems of discrimination that apply to other oppressed groups resisting incorporation by the dominant culture. In so doing, she echoes the call for solidarity raised by Henry Giroux (123). At the same time, Anzaldúa redirects the meaning of community, as Giroux does too, beyond essentialisms that ignore hierarchical power relations disguised as universals. Redefining postcolonial studies to include issues raised by women of color as well as with those discussing borders, Anzaldúa broadens, too, postmodern feminist theories that focus solely on sexist oppression while ignoring women's differences as they intersect across racial and economic lines. In scattered "tropical synagogues" (2), so called by Ilan Stavans because of their mix of Old and New World motifs, Latin American Jewish writers, along with other postcolonial intellectuals, engage in cosmopolitanism that moves between First and Third Worlds, cores and peripheries, centers and margins. By negating fixed borders and identities, all answer Anzaldúa's call for "teorías" that "cross borders" and "blur boundaries" (*Making Face, Making Soul* xxv) of analysis. Because Latin America offered them both "sanctuary and displacement" as Diane Wolf observes (207)—producing such paradoxes as marginality despite achievement and displacement despite success—these Jewish writers redefine notions of margin and center in a way that complicates conventional notions of subjectivity and subjugation.

According to Diane Wolf, such texts are indeed "transnational narratives par excellence" (191), speaking as they do in multilayered and often contradictory voices and experiences that do not fit easily into master narratives of hegemonic cultures. Latin-American Jewish women writers also recognize their position as representatives of a two-fold condition: that of a woman writer within two patriarchal cultures (Jewish and Catholic), marginalized thus by gender as well as heritage. While

[1]Gloria Anzaldúa. *Borderlands/La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 77.

conforming partly to what Walter Mignolo terms "a double subalternization" (261), they do, however, evoke a heritage that equates literacy with civility, as Anzaldúa's reconceptualization of ancient writing systems does not. Latin American Jewish women writers nonetheless negotiate between a language of emotions and of schooling. All engage in what Giroux terms "remapping as a form of resistance" (33), thus opening up a space that speaks of fluid and multiple selves.

In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa's theory of the New Mestiza provides a paradigm for looking at how Latin American Jewish women writers also define their narrative form through the concept of mestizaje, or mestizo culture. According to Mignolo, New Mestiza consciousness represents the theoretical component of border thinking, defined as "moments in which the imaginary of the modern world system cracks" (23). Understood in this context, Latin-American Jewish writing, as does Anzaldúa's, appears invested in establishing the primacy of an integrative diaspora that promotes dialogic conversations across borders–cultural and social, temporal and geographic. For example, Esther Seligson describes her writing as emerging from "a double source–temporal in its Judaism, spatial in Mexican culture" (30). Such texts portray not only the rich creativity of Mexican Jewish culture, but also its connections across vast areas of space and time. For them, meanings are not rigid but move about in the same manner as their lives. As Jews and Latin Americans, these women inhabit a space in between. In place of a single territoriality, Anzaldúa's concept of mestizaje implies a sense of belonging that is central to Latin-American Jewish writing. Authors such as Marjorie Agosín and Margo Glantz map a new cartography within the textual territory, a New Tribalism (*Interviews* 5), as Anzaldúa calls it, that speaks further of what she terms a "geography of selves" (*Interviews* 267) reaching far beyond their association with the respective nations of Chile and Mexico. Latin-American Jewish writing also forms part of a counter discourse, similar to the neplanta state described by Anzaldúa as a "dream state," "the transition between two worlds," as well as transformations across the borders of class, race or sexual identity (*Interviews* 267). By writing on the borderline of history and language, all are in a situation to translate the differences between them into a zone of solidarity, places where new allegiances are being forged in the rewriting of stories and the reclamation of pluralistic voices.

All are concerned with the interrelationship between individual and national identities, those voices on the periphery that, according to Homi Bhabha, represent "counter-Narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries" ("Dissemi Nation" 300). Written from the position of both homeless and global, dislocation and transnational existence, their texts "make the center evident," as Venezuelan Luisa Furtoransky claims (210), thus displaying border thinking that absorbs as it displaces hegemonic knowledge. The opposite of *galut*, defined by Howard Wettstein as "so hauntingly negative" because it suggests the

angst of dislocation, diaspora, though it connotes an "absence from some center" (1), translates as a more positive position in which it is possible to write against the center while simultaneously producing new forms of knowledge and identity. Hybrid products of wanderings and immigration, second-generation Latin-American Jewish writers, along with Anzaldúa, descend from immigrants but are not immigrants themselves; on the other hand, writers such as Marjorie Agosín write the histories and stories of their double diaspora (Latin-American Jewish writers exiled again in North America).

Whether expatriates, descendants of immigrants, or refugees–all are shaped by their hyphenated identities and their role as bridges between two cultures. For Anzaldúa, the bridge metaphor refers to Chicanas who reside in the borderlands between different cultures (*Interviews* 218). Though all the writers discussed here share a common heritage, what unites them is Anzaldúa's concept of the Borderlands which, she claims, anyone engaged in deconstructing and creating an identity can use (*Interviews* 218). "Which is my story?" asks Marjorie Agosín in her memoir *The Alphabet in My Hands*. Is it her great-grandmother Helena, driven mad by her Holocaust experiences? Or is it a childhood of "holy cards" (139), an identity borrowed from the dominant Catholic experience? Between these two realities Agosín, and others like her, struggles to create her own. Thinking against the center while simultaneously writing within that master narrative, Agosín problematizes the politics of place as she celebrates the possibilities of diasporic life but tempers it with a lingering sense of *galut*. Through a process akin to Anzaldúa's concept of *conocimiento*, what she defines as a self-definition of meaning (*Interviews* 267), Agosín creates a new identity. Moreover, as she writes in *Amigas*, a compilation of letters between this poet and the writer Emma Sepúlveda, she includes in this reality affiliation with the "destiny...of other marginalized women"(xi).

In order to create meaning, Agosín, as do others who live in cultural margins and borders, reaches out to others and identifies with them. Interpreted within this context, her writing may be read as an affirmation of Homi Bhabha's notion of "Dissemi Nation," fictions that he defines as just as much "acts of affiliation and establishment as they are moments of disavowal" (5); for Jewish writers in Latin America, such accounts of diaspora culture transcend national boundaries by exploring the possibility of an integrative relationship between subdominant and dominant cultures. While exploring the relationship between margin and center, this essay addresses the following question: What is it to be not only a Jewish writer in Latin America, a mixture of old traditions from the Sephardic and Ashkenazic worlds, but also a group that wants to belong and incorporate itself into the dominant culture? In *A Cross and A Star*, Agosín claims as her favorite among "all the words": "*alliances, alianzas*" (60). But she also expresses her sense of alienation in a culture which perceives her as among the Others, a people with a "memory like tattoos" (78).

Simultaneously, then, as Jewish women writers struggle to maintain their bonds with and the protection of their culture, they want understanding from the whole; "there's something seductive about fitting," says Anzaldúa, "being part of this one culture, forgetting differences" (*Interviews* 262)—a yearning, she might add, that for the Latin-American Jew, as for the Chicana, ends just as often in pitfalls as with acceptance. Representing both a shame to be overcome and an achievement, diasporic texts thus problematize postcolonial discourse by "bringing the margins to the center," in the words of Henry Giroux, "in terms of their own voices and histories" (58). Refusing to privilege homeland over diaspora, or diaspora over homeland, these writers illustrate the fragility of Jewish identity in modern times.

Latin-American Jewish writers facilitate an opportunity to explore the fluidity of identity as it exists within borderlands traversed by a variety of lives and voices. In areas where such cultures experience asymmetric race and class relations as a central organizing fact of society, such borderlands are also sites for critical analysis of how one becomes a woman in ways that are much more complex than simple opposition to men. For example, Latina Jews have found that economic and professional achievement does not guarantee social inclusion. A minority within a minority, coupled with marginality produced by gender as well as heritage, their literary legacy emphasizes this condition even more: Latina Jewish writers muddle an essentialist concept of identity and the notion of displacement as a recent condition. Writing as a collective, The Latina Feminist Group, in *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist* Testimonios, acknowledge what they claim is often lacking in mainstream women's movements, specifically the enormous internal differences among women of color. This is a condition that among Latina Jews, in particular, disrupts a homogenized understanding of race, ethnicity and gender. According to Ruth Behar, a Cuban-American Jew who refuses to "trim [her] life to fit into a single suitcase" ("*Mi Pente* / My Bridge" 66), the problem arises from a policy of racial classification that views Jews as "whites" and Latinas as "people of color." As a Cubana, she identifies with women of color. Even so, because Jews, along with certain other Europeans and middle-class Cubans of the first wave, have successfully integrated into American society, Behar finds herself viewed by some as "white." Still others, including neo-Nazi groups, remind her of the equivocal nature of any classification regarding race. Within her work, a discourse of difference develops which is multilayered and dialectical. According to Mignolo, neither skin color nor blood quantum serve as the final arbiters of identity. Instead, descriptions of both that are "devised and enacted in and by the coloniality of power" (16) determine the status quo. In an effort to name and analyze these complexities, Latina Jewish women write of difference within the dominant society as well as among themselves. At the same time, they negotiate spaces within and across borders in order to build bridges while still recognizing multiple geographies of origin. Most have experienced, as

did Agosín in her words, a "long and bewildering exile in the United States" (*Always from Somewhere Else* 66)—a sojourn through which all are perceived for the first time not as Jews but as Latinas, in other words, still foreign. Thus, there is no single definition of Jewish identity, thereby illustrating further, as Homi Bhabha notes, that the Other appears "never outside or beyond us" ("Introduction" 4), but instead exists within the confines of our most intimate conversations among ourselves.

Questions of origins, exile, place, and the diasporic condition are important not only to Jews, notes Agosín, but also to humans of all origins (*Miriam's Daughters* 16). This literature of exile broadens the scope of Jewish writing as individual writers attempt to define and analyze their identity, creating a literary genre that is linked to all people within the history of the Diasporic experience. Their work shows how complicated models of inequality are formed through racial, class and gender divisions that lie at the heart of the dominant culture. For example, in *Bridges to Cuba*, Ruth Behar, poet and professor of anthropology at the University of Michigan, notes that Blacks and Jews are two Diasporic peoples in Cuba who changed the ideas of "race" on the island and in the process were changed themselves (17). In *Telling to Live*, Latina activists reiterate certain traditions shared with those of black and other feminists of color. They point to Chicana feminists living in the Southwest whose theoretical work served as a watershed; by highlighting the contradictions of being women on the border, Chicana activists move beyond the black-white axis of racial discourse, a position that proves useful, too, as a critical metaphor for Latina Jewish *mestizaje*.

Being a Jew in predominantly Catholic countries is further problematized for those who live in a continent that is also mestizaje. Retrieving and being retrieved by imaginative creations of their ancestral past, they attempt to bridge outsider/insider status in their fiction. In "Venezuelan Jewish Writers and the Search for Heritage," Jean Friedman—by defining "our Jewish herencia" (centuries-old inheritance) (193) as the common denominator within Diasporic writing—echoes what Anzaldúa calls her "task" to "connect people to their past roots, their ancient cultures" (*Interviews* 36). As Mexican Americans are symbolic of the foreigner, so Jews in Latin America see themselves as wandering in the lands that they inhabit. While there are differences of opinion among writers included here, just as regional differences divide American Latinas, all participate in what Anzaldúa calls a "third or fourth way of conceptualizing identity" (*Interviews* 203). As if answering Anzaldúa's question—"What is the history behind your identity?" (*Interviews* 203)—each of these authors reach a balance between past and present, Spanish and Yiddish, group loyalty and belonging.

According to Ilan Stavans, it is no accident that the Hebraic elements in Hispanic tradition appear more clearly on that side of the Atlantic that itself emerged out of the clash of cultures ("On Separate Ground" 2). Using "metaphorical suitcases" (*Passion, Memory, Identity* xv), in the

words of Agosín, these writers use their nomadic condition to disrupt divisions constructed within the Diaspora. Similarly, Anzaldúa's theoretical position rests on Chicanas' place within multiple cultures—indigenous, Mexican, African—resulting in a synthesis of the conqueror and the conquered. As a Cuban-American who springs from European- and Turkish-Jewish ancestry, Ruth Behar shares Anzaldúa's sense of living in between. Describing her mother's efforts to blend Cuban with kosher cooking into a "creole culinary mix" (210), Behar recalls eating tamales and caldo gallego, both made kosher by substituting chicken and Hebrew National beef fry for pork. By choosing and redefining components of culinary culture, Behar's mother reconciles loyalty to tradition with change, encouraging the daughter to explore the areas in which Cuban and Jewish cultures meet. By echoing Anzaldúa's admonition that "tradition is not static, it's dynamic" (*Interviews* 178), Behar ensures the survival of her community while creating her own reality of its meaning.

In this way, Latin-American Jewish writers provide a means for revising the intersection between the centers and margins of institutional power. According to Giroux, honoring difference due to race, class, gender, and sexual preference, as the above suggests, is not enough. Identity politics, he concludes, must "be elaborated within, rather than against, a politics of solidarity." Refusing to create what Giroux terms a "hierarchy of struggles" (174), Latin-American Jewish writers define their own tradition but link it further to histories of other peoples. By extending specific struggles across geopolitical boundaries, writes Sonia Saldívar-Hull, feminism can build new bridges and continue to develop as a politically-significant body of ideas (36). Moreover, just as Anzaldúa's multiple identity as a working-class-origin lesbian of color allows her to acknowledge others' struggles, so Jewish women in Latin America, by challenging dictatorships of recent decades, have made important contributions in feminist and queer writing.

Placing their sympathies on the side of the oppressed, Latin-American Jewish women writers give voice to others who have also been silenced and cast out of their own culture. In so doing, they develop what Giroux labels a "politics of remembrance" in which different stories emerge at the "intersection of new forms of culture and identity" (174). Giving testimony as a form of remembering that goes beyond the individual, placing it in history, this writing points toward Anzaldúa's "vos/otros" (*Interviews* 254) concept that views the Other as similar to one's self. According to David Foster, Jews received particularly harsh treatment during the dictatorships in Argentina in the late 1970s (52). In *Pasos bajo del aqua* (*Steps Under Water* 1987), Alicia Kozameh documents her imprisonment in Rosario and Buenos Aires from 1975 until her "release under surveillance" in 1978. Linking herself to such testimonial work as Rigoberta Menchu, as well as Jewish law, which, according to Diane Wolf, requires that a witness must report injustice once

he/she has viewed it (184), Kozameh declares, "you and I are those women too" (42), affirming also her commitment to bear witness, to inform those who were not there. By telling her story, she makes witnesses out of those who read it, thus ensuring that subsequent generations become vicarious witnesses who might also fight for justice. Akin to Anzaldúa's description of how the conquest replaced indigenous character with a foreign one, Kozameh struggled to reclaim her lost identity. In her commitment to "the word" (143), Kozameh embodies what Agosín says she strives for in her work, to make "Judaism a metaphor of human life that struggles against intolerance" (*Alphabet in My Hands* 197). Recalling, as does Anzaldúa, the Nahuatl concept: "the soul speaks, the body acts" (*Making Face, Making Soul* xxiv), Kozameh employs her pen to call attention to the lives of women without access to print culture.

All reside in a space not recognized by dominant culture; Anzaldúa's is a borderland grounded in but not restricted to geographic space. For Chicano/as not located in the Southwest, she says, "language is a homeland" (*Borderlands* 55) because, as she continues, being Mexican transcends citizenship and "is a state of soul" (*Borderlands* 62). Creating cultural borderlands in which three languages combine to create a new way of "languaging"—Mignolo's term for that "moment between speech and writing" (252)—Anzaldúa writes beyond the concept of national language. Instead, she produces a form of literacy "embedded in her body" (253), as Mignolo notes, a condition that, he claims further, appears necessary for border thinking. For Latin-American Jewish writers too, theirs is not land or material goods but memory that provides an analogous anchoring space. According to Murray Baumgarten, memory and retelling are core components of Jewish tradition, from ancestral stories to witnessing as a means to further social justice. For them, the diaspora is a source of creativity and reality, an opportunity for transcending and reconstructing history, for writing about exile and its multifaceted themes. Along with generations of travelers before them, these writers embrace the contradictions of travel and home, creating, according to Agosín, a "new map, a new place" (*Passion, Memory, Identity* xiv) within the dominant literature of Latin America. Prominent in her writing, images of nature remind readers that the exiled often invent utopias of their own; "who said that a room of one's own is enough?" asks Agosín, in answer to Virginia Woolf, "why not enchanted gardens, / palaces of memory" (*Rain in the Desert* 60)—natural places, both imaginary and real, where those without acceptance by the dominant culture can find nourishment and grow.

In this imaginary universe, events do not unfold in a linear fashion, but are fluid and shifting. Dwelling in a woman's world of sharing discourse, Jewish Latina writers construct a time-space of their own. Memory is the thread that unifies their work, while, conversely, it is through the process of writing, claims Agosín, that they "create and weave memories" (*Passion, Memory, Identity* xxiv). Evoking a storied world composed of two separate time-space continua, Agosín articulates not a

chain of tradition but circles of life that are not only remembered but retold. In much the same way that the *compostura* seams together fragments to make a garment which, Anzaldúa claims, represents one's identity and reality in the world (*Interviews* 256), so Agosín compares exile to a piece of cloth. Referring to growing up in Athens, Georgia, where her family fled after the assassination of Salvador Allende, Agosín declares that "exile was like a piece of cloth that never took shape. It could not be embroidered over and over again," she concludes, "because it faded, fell apart, lost its color and texture" (*Alphabet in My Hands* 10). Echoing that weaving metaphor, Angelina Muñiz-Huberman, in her poem "Prodigal Daughter," asks the question: "How to recapture the broken story, how to grasp the stitch that escaped the needle" (35)? As if in answer, Latin-American Jewish women weave an intricate texture that is similar to the ways in which an indigenous woman remembers through her cloth. For example, Agosín describes her former homeland as an "immense shawl united by a free and beautiful language" (*Alphabet in My Hands* 110), thereby privileging a geography that is more concerned with remembering than a sense of place.

By suggesting that Jewish women have functioned as the primary producers of communal values through their storytelling, Agosín's writing engenders Jewish life. Narrating through the fabric of a "precious prayer shawl," Miriam Bornstein, too, makes a private art-form public. In *Making Face, Making Soul*, Anzaldúa defines "interfacing" as a sewing term describing the weaving together of two fabrics. In that space, she continues, between externally imposed masks, are "inner faces," providing binding that supports even while it "cracks the masks" (xvi) of oppression. Born in Mexico to a Mexican mother and Polish father, whose family fled Poland just before the Nazi takeover, Miriam Bornstein, a poet and literary critic, who resides now in Colorado, reveals this consciousness of hybridity in her work. In an essay entitled "On the Border: Essential Stories," Bornstein describes herself as hybrid, pluralistic and multicultural, and formed by complex cultural and national forces; "I have always been crossing borders," she declares, and so it is among the many "lines, fences, barricades" and other barriers that she reclaims and rewrites the story of her heritage. Using "undocumented memories and histories" (218), Bornstein successfully recovers a suppressed and almost invisible past. Envisioning a "woman's cloth, a reboso," with "colors of [her] own history and culture" (225), she makes her family's complex past her own. Thus she writes within her own reality but also of the shared history of diaspora that joins her to others who compose stories made of cloth. Like the *arpilleristas* of Santiago de Chile who, according to Agosín, challenged the Pinochet dictatorship by narrating through tapestries what could not be said in words (*Tapestries of Hope, Threads of Love* xii), Bornstein transforms domestic labor into a form of political resistance to silence. Such narratives, according to Giroux, emerge from the "discourse

of everyday life" (131), yet are forgotten stories that are brought forward within the conditions of struggle.

The matter of displacement is central in the works of other Latin-American Jewish writers. In particular, they invent utopias like dreams—the only safe haven, perhaps, for an uprooted and dislodged people. Carrying "'home' on [her] back" like a "turtle" (*Borderlands* 16), Anzaldúa, also creates interior dwellings that reach beyond identification with any country. Referring to Aztlan, the mythical homeland of preconquest Aztecs located in the present day American Southwest, she transforms it by inserting her own reality. In Anzaldúa's world, fantasy becomes reality, a notion that recalls the Jewish writers' mystic search for faith and their relationship with an internal Diaspora. A methodology that defies conventional narrative and privileges intuition, Anzaldúa's notion of "reality as a continuum" (*Interviews* 18) suggests strategies for intertwining others' stories with new feminist threads.

Just as Anzaldúa's revisionary discourse encourages her to look inward while claiming a new, multifaceted spirituality, so Latin-American Jewish women write from multiple, imaginary spaces. According to Edna Aizenberg, Alberto Gerchunoff's collection of stories, *Los Gauchos Judiós* (*The Jewish Cowboys*) (1910), the first literary work written in Spanish by a Jew in Argentina, was quite different. By professing the possibility of assimilation, it represented an earlier generation's desire to belong to "*one* specific place and *one* specific history" (108). Eventually, in what Aizenberg calls "the parricide of the pampas" (109), another generation, influenced by rising anti-Semitism, dictatorships, and exile, would replace the search for homeland with immersion in mystical texts as a way of prevailing over their misfortunes.

For them, the Diaspora offers a space for transcending and reconstructing images that have oppressed all Latinas for generations. For example, Mexican writer Angelina Muñiz-Huberman defies conventional narrative, as does Anzaldúa, and creates a mystical space where poetry becomes analogous to truth. Born in 1937 in Southern France, where her Spanish parents had sought asylum during the Civil War, Muñiz-Huberman eventually settled with her family in Mexico City. "This going from country to country created my inner dwelling," she writes; not at home in the world, she remains at home in the word, a space where nomads who carry their stories with them are not extinguished. "Having lost my own land," Muñiz-Huberman continues, "I grasped the land of the words" ("Death, Exile, Inheritance" 46), that spiritual part of herself that draws from the occult tradition of the Spanish renaissance. While not directly linked, it also resembles Anzaldúa's notion of "nagual" (*Interviews* 272), or soul, which she defines as the unconscious life of the writer.

"Being Mexican is a state of soul," writes Anzaldúa, "not one of mind, not one of citizenship" (*Borderlands* 62). For Muñiz-Huberman, not to have a country means creating an imaginary landscape that has never

been. In her writing, she molds the present with both the remembered and relinquished past. Creating "transmutations," in her words, she writes stories that take off in "new directions, in great open spaces, without limits or borders" ("Death, Exile, Inheritance" 46). In *Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination*, Sidra Ezrahi notes, that "writing the exile" resists both beginnings and endings by creating a "sensibility that privileges the *middle* as an errant, meandering, endlessly diffused, never-ending story" (10). In *The Enclosed Garden*, Muñiz-Huberman presents a separate place, according to Lois Zamora, that is really the exile's space of "non-belonging" (Translator's Preface). In the story "Retrospection," for example, time is a space marked out by memory. An "existence neither here nor there, atypical and anachronistic" that the author calls "neplanta" (93), it translates in the Nahuatl language as "middle ground" (Translator's Note 96), analogous to the "in between" state that Anzaldúa uses to describe the Borderlands. Returning to Ezrahi, "writing the exile," in her words, thus becomes "more than a response to displacement"(10); it merges in Muñiz-Huberman's work, as it does in others, in what Ezrahi terms "a form of restoration of alternative sovereignty," an enclosed garden, similar to Aztlan, which is also exile.

All share an awareness of living on the fringes, alienated and alone. If exile means being "in a state of psychic unrest, in a Borderland," as Anzaldúa says, it is also, she continues, "what makes poets write"(*Borderlands* 73). Looking at writing as something she must do, as a way of handling her pain, Anzaldúa feels a "calling to be an artist" (*Interviews* 19). "Healing through words, using words as a medium for expressing the flight of the soul" (*Interviews* 19)–in this way, Anzaldúa makes sense of burdens shared by Jewish Latina writers. "Making soul" (*Interviews* 225), she calls it; it is a way of changing the models that she works from. For Latin-American Jewish women, as for Anzaldúa, the passion of writing seems to spring from a desire to connect the pieces of their lives. Rather than considering her Mexican Sephardic and Ashkenazic roots as a "schizophrenic burden," Angelina Muñiz-Huberman also welcomes these as a source of creativity and as "typical" ("The Authors Speak" 11) of Mexican-Jewish backgrounds. Muñiz-Huberman places herself in her own reality, yet there is a common Diasporic experience that she shares with others. "Each person is a unique hybrid," writes Sabrina Berman, echoing this idea. "To be a Jew," for Berman, means "partaking in at least two destinies": that of "Mexican by decision" and "Jewish by choice and by faith" ("The Authors Speak" 11). As does Anzaldúa, both survive racism and cultural estrangement by filtering it through writing.

If the imagination of Latina-Jewish discourse provides a useful model for understanding Anzaldúa's New Mestiza, it is also instructive to investigate within a broader framework. In particular, the need for acknowledging difference is of growing interest to those reshaping their origins and identities against that of the dominant culture. Written off as

an insignificant minority, seldom defined except as stereotypes, their historical invisibility, paradoxically, leaves all Latinas a space in which to define and create themselves. "Making my soul, creating myself as I go along" (*Interviews* 64), Anzaldúa calls it, that process of appositional writing and its characteristics–resistance to linguistic/spacial territorialization, political dissent, and a privileging of collective over individual identity.

All of these writers share a tradition of multiple exiles and migrations; thus the matter of place as well as displacement, defines their writing. "We have a tradition of migration," writes Anzaldúa, "a tradition of long walks" (*Borderlands* 11) that also means for some, living in exile in their own countries. This dialectic of myriad spaces caused by the shared experience of migration, exile, and displacement links their work to postcolonial writing. Defined by Anzaldúa as an "emancipatory process"(*Interviews* 265), it allows for self-agency and change. According to Irwin Hall, displaced Jews, because of their difference, have become "society's voice of moral consciousness against the absolutist claims of the modern state." Jewish "particularism," Hall continues, acts thereby as a "bastion against the totalitarian tendency underlying universalism" (182). By constructing identity in this way, Latin-American Jewish writers question categories that restrict identity and, simultaneously, expand our definitions of "place."

By challenging accepted readings of language and location, the fractured and questioning counter discourse of these writers envisions another kind of Nation–fissured and in search of polyvocal alternatives to established political structures. "As a kind of cabalist," Muñiz-Huberman relates, one who creates a world whose order can be found in mystical texts, like the Kabbalah, she writes of striving "to blend genders and break rules," maintaining throughout an overall sense of harmony. Recalling Anzaldúa's reconstruction of Aztlan as a feminist site of resistance, Muñiz-Huberman creates memories that are real and invented, imagined and lived. In this way, she appropriates her own territory—a space in which she can safely write biography that, she says, "is really fiction," providing a reinterpretation of the lives of real people.

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