



Revolutionary Futures

Nietzsche, Anzaldúa, and Playful “World”-Travel

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Abstract: In this article I argue that the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, Gloria Anzaldúa, and María Lugones can, taken together, offer a rich and innovative approach to understanding and realizing the possibility of revolution. From radically opposed perspectives, both Nietzsche and Anzaldúa articulate the necessity of accepting contradiction and multiplicity as the conditions of political transformation, and offer a new conception of revolution that displaces mere reversal as its dominant meaning. Lugones supplies important tactical strategies for realizing this revolution in her suggestions of playful “world”-travel. Taken together, these three thinkers challenge radical critics to re-think not only the revolutionary project itself, but also their own position with regard to that project, and to the dominant order they seek to overturn.

En unas pocas centurias, the future will belong to the mestiza.

—Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*

Even laughter may yet have a future.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* §1

I am a plurality of selves.

—María Lugones, “Playfulness, ‘World’-Traveling, and Loving Perception”

This paper is part of an ongoing project of thinking through the question of revolution—both what it is, and if it is possible. I came to this problem by way of an obvious path—feminism—and a not so obvious path—Friedrich Nietzsche, a 19th century

German philosopher who most people consider not having been primarily concerned with politics (and much less so with revolution).

However, I am currently arguing in another project that Nietzsche was overwhelmingly preoccupied with the question of revolution. And as a student of feminist theory, I have found remarkable and unexpected parallels between Nietzsche’s thinking and certain revolutionary feminist theories. For example, both Nietzsche and revolutionary feminism offer what we might call a thoroughgoing critique of everything existing, a fine and distinguished practice of revolutionaries long before Marx articulated their project as such. Second, both Nietzsche and revolutionary feminist critics exhibit an exemplary self-consciousness regarding revolutionary desire. They recog-

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nize, in other words, their situatedness—the fact that their position as critics is itself a by-product of the very relations and structures they seek to overthrow. This recognition is aptly demonstrated, for example, by our conference's honoree today, Gloria Anzaldúa.

This recognition is a difficult one, for it seems to suggest the impossibility of making revolution at all. After all, if I am implicated in—even produced by—the very relations and structures I critique, how can I advocate their radical overthrow without advocating suicide? More, how can I advocate their obliteration without also advocating a violence so destructive it is genocidal? Nietzsche frames this question as the problem of affirmation, and I think it is the fundamental difficulty his philosophy addresses—how to critique everything without exempting oneself, while simultaneously affirming everything (and *thus* oneself) as necessary, important, even beautiful.

The difficulty of this task may explain why Nietzsche's philosophy simply comes to a stop here—he does not seem able to offer a complete or satisfying answer to the question of how such a task can be undertaken. This could be seen as an important warning—such a way of life may be impossible. But perhaps this is the case only if we maintain a particular understanding of revolution intact, an understanding that demands the utter obliteration of everything that has gone before. And what if Nietzsche is proposing a different kind of revolution altogether, a kind of revolution that does not seek radical overthrow or complete destruction as its goal, a revolution that is, instead, an embrace of paradox, contradiction, and multiplicity, a revolution that is, in effect, a revolution in the very notion of revolution itself?

This leads me to the third parallel I see between Nietzsche and revolutionary feminism: an attempt at revolutionizing the very idea of revolution itself. For the revo-

lution Nietzsche attempts to instigate in modernity seeks radical overthrow *not* via complete or total destruction of all existence, but rather through the demand that paradox, contradiction, and multiplicity be understood and embraced as the fundamental conditions of human life. I see a parallel revolution in the meaning of revolution in critiques of feminism by feminists of color, and I see it in feminisms that most clearly embrace the importance of hybridity and/or multiplicity in their understanding of meaning and subjectivity. Often these two go together, for as many feminists of color have pointed out, racist parameters of “society” and propriety produce a “double” or “multiple” consciousness for those defined as outside the “un-raced,” white norm (Anzaldúa 1987; Guinier 1991; Lorde 1984; Lugones 2003; Matsuda 1996; Williams 1991). Thus, it is no accident that it is primarily feminists of color who prioritize multiplicity.

Yet this prioritization (and its appropriation by “postmodernism”) is often accused of *destroying* the possibility of revolution—or any political action—altogether. If meanings and identities are multiple, and truth is a matter of perspective, how can we offer any critique at all, much less enact political change? Directed at Nietzscheans, “postmodernists,” and feminists of color alike, the insistence on plurality and multiplicity is deemed threatening *not* to the dominant order, but to the revolutionary critics who seek to overturn it.

This is a serious objection, one that is not to be taken lightly. It poses the important question of whether it is possible to bring anything truly *new* into being, the goal of all revolutions. The answer given by both Nietzsche and Anzaldúa is no—such a thing is impossible. Just as there is no childbirth without a mother, there is no new political order without a previous set of conditions from which it emerges and to which it is indebted. Everything that *is* or comes into being is necessarily an outgrowth of

what came before, and on which it is dependent for its very existence. Consequently, the radical critic is herself multiple—she is both beholden to the existing order *and* someone who advocates its radical transformation. In order to simply maintain—much less affirm—her own existence, then, the critic must necessarily acknowledge her hybridity. She cannot deny the mother without destroying herself.

Does this mean revolution is impossible? Yes, in the traditional sense, as a definitive break with the old and the inauguration of the radically new and unknown. But no, and in a new sense. For Nietzsche's point, which is similar to the point made by feminists of color (and which remains largely ignored unless articulated in the legitimating jargon of "postmodernism") is that the insistence on the multiplicity of the self is itself a revolutionary act. Subjectivity, identity, and meaning are *not* univocal, and this holds whether we are offering a Christian interpretation of these or a Nietzschean interpretation, a patriarchal interpretation or a feminist one. In either case, there is still a major investment in interpretive authority, an insistence that some view or other is "true" to the necessary exclusion of all others. In Nietzsche's terms, there is still a monotheism of meaning. Revolutionary critique, understood as the demand for the overthrow of everything existing, maintains this interpretive authority or monotheism of meaning intact, insofar as it insists it is the only "right" understanding of political reality.¹ While revolutionary critique may constitute a reversal—what was good is actually bad, what was "just" is really unjust—nevertheless the insistence on the truth of the reversal retains the authority that legitimates the terms "good" and "just" to begin with. "Revolution," then, actually maintains the imperative of power

that legitimates knowledge as "true" in order to generate its own critical or normative force. Viewed in this way, "revolution" looks more like the simple substitution of one god for another.

Feminists of color, specifically our honoree Gloria Anzaldúa, and another Latina feminist, María Lugones, understand this problem of revolution, and have attempted in their work to shift to a new understanding of political transformation based on an understanding of the self, identity, and meaning as always already multiple. For them, the truly revolutionary question is if and how we will choose to recognize such a condition. I think this stance is similar to what is often referred to as Nietzsche's "perspectivism," his claim that "There is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective 'knowing;'"² and that with regard to the world, "we cannot reject the possibility that it may include infinite interpretations."³ Rejecting the authoritativeness of knowledge or "truth," Nietzsche says he hopes that by now we would be "far from the ridiculous immodesty that would be involved in decreeing from our corner that perspectives are permitted only from this corner."⁴ Rather, "the more affects we allow to speak about one thing, the more eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity,' be."⁵

Nietzsche claims that recognizing the multiplicity of the subject and the perspectival character of truth is a terrifying, shattering revelation that requires great personal fortitude to survive, much less affirm. By contrast, for Anzaldúa, this recognition is *empowering*. Bypassing Nietzsche's tortured reticence and anguish, Anzaldúa wholeheartedly recommends, explicitly and without reservation, the adoption of *mestiza consciousness*, a way of thinking

¹ This was one of Judith Butler's main points in her much decried critique of feminist authority in *Gender Trouble* (1990).

² *GM* III:12.

³ *GS* 374.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *GM* III:12.

and being that embraces hybridity, and actively chooses a life in the crossroads of paradox and contradiction. These physical, emotional, and psychological borderlands are both old places and new ones, self-created yet indebted to the past, suffused with powerful affirmations of both self and world.

The reason for this difference in attitude toward the dissolution of singular or universal truth has to do with perspective itself: unlike Anzaldúa, Nietzsche has a *stake* in this view of truth—his revolution is a direct attack on a way of life and thought that he himself is most deeply invested in. By contrast, Lugones and Anzaldúa have no investment in the singularity of truth or subjectivity, because they are the by-products of its oppression. The multiplicity of the self or consciousness that these feminists document is not simply, as it is for Nietzsche, an epistemological claim about truth or a metaphysical dispute regarding what exists. It is, rather, a *political* claim about *material* reality. The task of acknowledging such multiplicity is thus primarily a task for those invested in the system, those who, by the very nature of their commitment to a singularity of truth and subjectivity, are blind to the oppressive by-products of such a view.

Both Anzaldúa and another Latina feminist, María Lugones, have attempted in their work to shift to a new understanding of political transformation based on an understanding of the self, identity, and meaning as always already multiple. For both, the truly revolutionary question is *if* and *how* we will choose to recognize such a condition. What Lugones brings to the discussion is, first, an insight into Nietzsche's struggle to accept the condition of multiplicity and perspectivism he himself suggests—Lugones realizes that such recognition will be most threatening to those who have the most to lose from the dissolution of a single, stable, or universal truth. This results, second, in her important inclusion

of active engagement with the oppressors—at least those open to such engagement—and not simply the condition and critique of the oppressed. Thus, third, her suggested strategies of interaction, playfulness, and “world”-travel hold the potential not only to revolutionize the very structure of domination in the West, but also to make that new way of life there sustainable, thereby redeeming both Nietzsche's *and* Anzaldúa's revolutionary promise. For it is only when the oppressors change—not simply from one group to another, but foundationally, psychologically, materially—that revolution can truly come into being.

What both Nietzsche and feminism offer—from radically opposing political perspectives—is the possibility of re-thinking revolution itself, both what it is and how it is possible. Nietzsche and Anzaldúa set us on the (cross)road(s) of paradox; Lugones gives us the tools to make that journey into a way of life. All three thinkers argue that to refuse recognition of multiplicity and perspectivism as the condition of life is to remain rooted in the past, to be unable to enact any political change that is not simply an accommodation of the existing system. Thus contradiction is not a condition to be overcome by a new order that will dissolve all paradox and render the fragmented world whole again, but rather the very condition and only possibility of a new way of life.

A CRITIQUE OF EVERYTHING EXISTING

In Nietzsche's philosophy, we find a sustained and comprehensive critique of the West—its categories, cultures, and political configurations, or what Nietzsche calls its “forms of life.” Nietzsche often imprecisely substitutes “Christianity” or the even more vague demarcation “modernity” as surrogate targets for this critique. But

these vague and contested terms function within Nietzsche's philosophy as cultural designations, indicating a time and place—in this case, the West, and the major portion of its historical existence—in which human beings exhibit particular modes or practices of life.

Central among Nietzsche's criticisms of the West is his profound disregard for what he calls its "will to truth." Both a secularized and more general version of the Christian demand that there be a divine purpose of existence, Nietzsche sees the deep need for justification, whether of life or of suffering or simply of arguments, as the very hallmark of the West. It is both cause and effect of our sense that life itself is loathsome or somehow unworthy. Our need for justification suggests an originary lack, a deficiency we suspect about life itself. Pain, suffering, trauma, ugliness, cruelty, disappointment, and failure, all constitute objections to life for us, and Nietzsche says that we not only equate life with this suffering, but we demand that it be explained. We do not, in the modern West, live simply because we are alive. This tautology is merely a declaration, not yet a reason. The pain that is life cries out for a higher purpose that will render it ultimately worthwhile. Otherwise, we despair, it shall have been in vain.

Nietzsche argues that this displacement of the value of life is the symptom of an illness he calls *decadence*. Our contraction of this disease, as explained in the Second Essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, has produced a sickened, humanized body, burdened by consciousness (or "soul"), and thrown headlong into the abyss of nihilism and decline. For non-conscious, animalic beings, life is simply lived—it is neither denigrated nor affirmed. Yet modern human beings have lost this capacity. Life has become for us an object of scrutiny, its meaning or importance a source of anxious bewilderment. That we are anguished regarding life's purposeless suffering and

meaningless flux bespeaks for Nietzsche a species of creatures in decline, a species that has fallen away from a healthier mode of living. Although Nietzsche admits that life cannot, in fact, *be* justified,⁶ in modernity this fact has become a cruel and bitter fate. Life's illegitimacy is the anguish of modernity, which would rather, as Nietzsche notes in the *Genealogy*, "will nothingness than not will."⁷

Of course, not only are complete or satisfying accounts of one's life (much less one's arguments!) impossible, but it is not clear that they are necessary for the business of living. Nietzsche in fact argues that life is best understood as flux, a constant chaos of becoming and change that we humans cannot survive unless we set about ordering and organizing it, thereby rendering it intelligible to ourselves. It is when we mistake this intelligibility for "truth" that we get into trouble, however, for it is then that the universe becomes illegitimately subject to laws, unities, events, causes, and effects. In effect, we mistake our orderings of the world for the world itself. Often we glorify this "truth," calling it God's will, or nature, or natural law, thus moralizing the "order" we discern and believe is waiting to be uncovered. But both the order and the belief in its truth are lies, Nietzsche argues, and in his view, both suggest a need to escape or retreat from the infinite complexity and unpredictability of the world. Nietzsche explains the "will to truth" as the will "to make all being thinkable."⁸ But this is precisely the problem. Why is thinking required for being? Why must life be intelligible in order to be lived? Can suffering really be "justified"? Isn't it just...suffering?

The gruesome culmination of this sickness is what Nietzsche calls "nihilism." For Nietzsche, the life-denying logic of the will

⁶ *GS* 121; *TI* "Socrates" 2, "Anti-Nature" 5.

⁷ *GM* III:1, 28.

⁸ *ZII*:12.

to truth is the logic of modernity; it epitomizes the various moralities and methodologies which govern its intellectual and ethical life: Platonism, Christianity, Kantianism, scientific method, aesthetics, and modern education. These moralities produce what Nietzsche calls “ascetic ideals,” ways of thinking and living that privilege security and protection from the perpetual flux of life. These “ideals” take many forms: the soul, the ego or subject, the law of cause and effect, science, the afterworldly, redemption, God’s grace, truth, nature. Each of these “ideals” is an attempt to isolate a realm of existence untouched by contingency, becoming, or change. Idealism of this sort is, on Nietzsche’s view, nihilism—it is an escapist drive toward death:

We can no longer conceal from ourselves what is expressed by all that willing which has taken its direction from the ascetic ideal: this hatred of the human, and even more of the animal, and more still of the material, this horror of the senses, of reason itself, this fear of happiness and beauty, this longing to get away from all appearance, change, becoming, death, wishing, from longing itself—all this means—let us dare to grasp it—a will to nothingness, an aversion to life, a rebellion against the most fundamental presuppositions of life ...⁹

Denigrating life’s constitutive aspects of “appearance, change, becoming, death, wishing,” and “longing,” the ascetic ideal dismisses them as both inessential and loathsome. Within its terms, life *as* life is both mendacious and revolting. The logic of the ascetic ideal is the logic of suicide, of safety and security only in death. On Nietzsche’s troubled and troubling view, then, modern human beings are a species of

living dead, walking incarnations of the suicidal tendency.

By contrast, Gloria Anzaldúa offers a more immediately material and concrete critique of the West. In brief, it is this: “The world is not a safe place to live in” (20). As a part-Indian, Chicana, lesbian, woman of color in the U.S., Anzaldúa argues:

The dark-skinned woman has been silenced, gagged, caged, bound into servitude with marriage, bludgeoned for 300 years, sterilized and castrated in the 20th century. For 300 years she has been a slave, a force of cheap labor, colonized by the Spaniard, the Anglo, by her own people (and in Mesoamerica her lot under the Indian patriarchs was not free of wounding). For 300 years she was invisible, she was not heard. (1987, 22-3)

The colonization of American Indians by the Spaniards, the dispossession of Tejanos and Mexicanos from their land in the Mexican-American war, the buying of the U.S. Southwest by Anglo companies who then employ these dispossessed people to work and irrigate the land, the continued (to this day) American reliance on Mexican maquiladoras for cheap labor and goods across the border, the demonization of Mexicanos returning to their land as illegal immigration (or infestation, or worse), all conspire to assure that the world is indeed a very unsafe place, both for Anzaldúa and otherwise.

Accompanying these material invasions and devastations is a mentality of purity, a mentality Anzaldúa sees in both Anglo and Chicano culture. She experiences this demand for purity in the condemnation of her queerness, when she is exiled for failing to be a woman, or, what is the same thing, subservient to the men of her culture, or, what is yet still the same thing, to be singly or solely feminine: “Contrary to some

⁹ *GM*III:28.

psychiatric tenets, half and halves are not suffering from a confusion of sexual identity, or even from a confusion of gender. What we are suffering from is an absolute despot duality that says we are able to be only one or the other" (19). She experiences the demand for purity around language: "Chicano Spanish is considered by the purist and by most Latinos deficient, a mutilation of Spanish" (55). And she experiences the demand for purity in relation to going home, a place that does not yet exist for her because she cannot be contained by any existing form of it—Chicano culture, Indian/Aztec culture, Anglo culture. A refugee from every culture that can lay claim on her, Anzaldúa retreats from all of these identities and their demands for purity, declaring, "I am a turtle, wherever I go I carry 'home' on my back" (21).

SPEAKING A WILD TONGUE: THE LANGUAGE OF CRITIQUE

When one takes up the task of critiquing everything existing, one's own voice and language themselves become problematic. This is because a critique of everything existing necessarily includes a critique even of language and intelligibility itself. The very categories of thought and communication by which we understand ourselves and one another are implicated in the old order. In Nietzsche's case, language reflects the desire for truth to begin with—in some places, he suggests that it is because of grammatical structure that we are invested in the idea of the subject at all.¹⁰ Because even language itself becomes problematic, both Nietzsche and Anzaldúa take up the project of writing and speaking a new language as the necessary task in making revolution.

The primary obstacle to such a strategy, of course, is that it becomes very difficult to

make oneself understood.¹¹ Nietzsche explicitly acknowledges that his new way of speaking is a communication that hovers on the very boundaries of unintelligibility. He presents his own works (especially *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*) as exemplars of a private language that he believes will make very little sense to modern readers insofar as he has succeeded in separating himself from his age. If a new form of life is to be possible, Nietzsche thinks that one must embark upon the wrenchingly difficult task of developing what he calls, in reference to himself, "my own language for my own things."¹² Speaking of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche regrets his inability there to articulate "an individual language of my own for such individual views and hazards,"¹³ and he refers to *Zarathustra* as "the first language for a new series of experiences."¹⁴ The more unique one's experiences, he claims, the less likely it is that one will ever successfully communicate oneself. This conundrum begins *The Gay Science*: "This book may need more than one preface, and in the end there would still remain room for doubt whether anyone who had never lived through similar experiences could be brought closer to the experience of this book by means of prefaces."¹⁵

For Anzaldúa, language is the location of purity. To demarcate what language she speaks is to fix her identity as one thing or another—Indian, Mexican, Chicano, American—none of which she is or can comfortably inhabit fully. Thus her language in *Borderlands/La Frontera* is an unidentifiable mixture of all of them, a plural patois of tex-

¹¹ From this perspective, then, the abundant criticism of Butler's dense and allegedly impenetrable prose in *Gender Trouble* seems to miss the mark—not only is Butler critiquing the norms of intelligibility that govern language, but she is attempting to subvert those norms in her very use of language itself, perhaps in an attempt to create a new language and meaning.

¹² GMP4.

¹³ BTP6.

¹⁴ EH "Books" 1.

¹⁵ GSP1.

¹⁰ E.g., BGE 35; cf. GMI:13.

mex Spanish mixed with native Indian dialect (Preface). While enough of the book is written in English so as to allow readers like myself to glimpse Anzaldúa's meaning, it is not simply for gringas that Anzaldúa writes, or simply them whom she wishes to challenge. Her language is an address to Spanish speakers as well, and a challenge insofar as it incorporates both Indian vocabulary and Americanized Spanish slang, creating what Anzaldúa proudly calls Chicano Spanish.

For a people who are neither Spanish nor live in a country in which Spanish is the first language; for a people who live in a country in which English is the reigning tongue but who are not Anglo; for a people who cannot entirely identify with either standard (formal, Castilian) Spanish nor standard English, what recourse is left to them but to create their own language? (55)

Just as Nietzsche believes his new use of language reflects a singular set of experiences, so too does Anzaldúa point out that the existence of a new people demands the creation of a new language.

Anzaldúa is clear about the importance of her new language. Just as Nietzsche points out that an insistence on a stable or univocal truth is a disparagement of life, so too does Anzaldúa argue that disdain for Chicano Spanish equals a disdain of Chicanos/as, their life and their existence. "Chicano Spanish is a border tongue which developed naturally..." (55). To reprimand Chicanos/as for speaking their own language incorrectly is to reprimand life itself, which has come into being just as the Chicano/a people have into being—"Chicano Spanish is not incorrect, it is a *living* language" (55, emphasis added). And how can life be incorrect? Chicanos/as seek "A language which they can connect their identity

to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves—a language with terms that are neither *español* nor *inglés*, but both" (55). Just as Nietzsche seeks a new language for a new set of experiences, so too do Chicanos/as seek a new language for their newly emergent set of experiences and identity. A dismissal of Chicano Spanish is thus synonymous with a dismissal of the Chicano people; or, in Nietzsche's terminology, with a condemnation of life itself. As Anzaldúa writes, "Until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish, and as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate" (59).

The difficulty of Anzaldúa's language, then, and the challenge of her intelligibility for her readers, is itself a challenge for us to understand a new way of life, just as is Nietzsche's language. Just as this new, borderland population has come into being as a distinct identity, neither simply Spanish nor simply American, so too must a new language be born that can communicate this way of life that is neither/nor, both/and. It is a way of life that refuses the purity of either/or categories, and exchanges the singularity of analysis and conclusion with the multiplicity of perspectival knowledge:

La mestiza constantly has to shift out of habitual formations; from convergent thinking, analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move toward a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking, characterized by movement away from set patterns and goals and toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes" (79; cf. Nietzsche's multiple "eyes").

It is a way of life that refuses an invisibility born of domination and enforced through silence: "I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white. I will have my serpent's tongue—my woman's voice, my sexual voice, my poet's voice. I will overcome the tradition of silence" (59). It is a way of life that demands recognition as a way of life, in part and precisely by those who brought it into being. This is what Anzaldúa means when she says that Mexico is America's "double" or "shadow" (86). The purity of thought that governs knowledge and makes colonialism possible has the ironic effect of producing precisely that which it says cannot exist—a people of the borderlands, an impure "race" that is neither one thing nor the other, yet both at the same time. This uncomfortable reality is easier to ignore or oppress into silence than to acknowledge. Racist and colonialist domination, in other words, are the practices of dualist thinking, a mode of thought that allows the dominators to ignore the dominated as its necessary but "irrelevant" remainders:

We need to say to white society: We need you to accept the fact that Chicanos are different, to acknowledge your rejection and negation of us. We need you to own the fact that you looked upon us as less than human, that you stole our lands, our personhood, our self-respect. We need you to make public restitution: to say that, to compensate for your own sense of defectiveness, you strive for power over us, you erase our history and our experience because it makes you feel guilty—you'd rather forget your brutish acts. To say you've split yourself from minority groups, that you disown us, that your dual consciousness splits off parts of yourself, transferring the

"negative" parts onto us. (Where there is persecution of minorities, there is shadow projection. Where there is violence and war, there is repression of shadow)...Admit that Mexico is your double, that she exists in the shadow of this country, that we are irrevocably tied to her. Gringo, accept the doppelganger in your psyche. (86-6)

Anzaldúa recognizes how dangerous this new language is. She says she speaks in a "serpent's voice" (59), and calls the patois of Chicano Spanish a "forked tongue" (55). But only in contexts dominated by the will to truth do multiplicity or newly emergent, hybrid forms of life seem devilish. This is because such tongues challenge the very authority of truth itself, and the material privileges and domination of those able to access and wield that truth. For Anzaldúa, this "forked tongue" signals the emergence of a new consciousness, a *mestiza* consciousness. It is a consciousness that has "a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity" (79).

In developing *mestiza* consciousness, Anzaldúa argues that her first task is to "take inventory"—to take stock of herself and determine what is rightfully hers, what she rejects, and what she cannot help but be. This task is daunting, because "*es difícil* differentiating between *lo heredado, lo adquirido, lo impuesto*" (82). Although in taking this inventory, Anzaldúa says she "puts history through a sieve" and "winnows out the lies," nevertheless she also acknowledges the ways in which this winnowing is a creative act, a conscious construction of the self that is neither true nor false: "This step is a conscious rupture with all oppressive traditions of all cultures and religions...She [the *mestiza*] reinterprets history and, using new symbols, *she shapes new myths*...She surrenders all notions of safety, of the familiar...She learns to transform the small 'I' into the total Self" (82-3, emphasis

added). In rejecting lies, the mestiza creates new truths, truths that are “myths,” *just as the old ones were*. Anzaldúa’s new myths, her total Self, are indeed truths, just as Nietzsche’s assertion that being is better understood as becoming is a truth. But these are not truths in the authoritarian way that both Nietzsche and Anzaldúa seek to overturn. They are not truths in the way the ascetic ideal is a truth, a truth that “permits no other interpretation, no other goal;” that “rejects, denies, affirms, and sanctions solely from the point of view of *its* interpretation.”¹⁶ Rather, this is a truth born of the borderlands, the by-product of living on a “thin edge of barbwire” (3, 13) which can grant no definitive authority to either “side” of the line.

Although Anzaldúa insists that “Nothing happens in the ‘real’ world unless it first happens in the images in our heads” (87), her account of the emergence of mestiza consciousness contradicts this idealist view. In fact, it is because of the concrete, material existence of the borderlands and its people that *mestizaje* becomes possible; glimpsing this new form of life becomes the animus for Anzaldúa’s revolutionary struggle to bring it into being as a widespread way of life, as a *cultura*:

What I want is an accounting with all three cultures—white, Mexican, Indian. I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of my entrails. And if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture—*una cultura mestiza*—with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture. (22)

It is because of its renunciation of epis-

temological authority that mestiza consciousness can become a revolutionary goal of cultural production. This is Anzaldúa’s view of *la futura*:

En unas pocas centurias, the future will belong to the mestiza. Because the future depends on the breaking down of paradigms, it depends on the straddling of two or more cultures. By creating a new mythos—that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the way we behave—*la mestiza* creates a new consciousness. (80)

Mestiza consciousness is possible only because these paradigms have already begun to fragment and dissolve. The existence of the borderlands is concrete evidence of this. The challenge is to recognize and embrace this paradox, refusing the dualist, either/or thinking that would insist that no such place as “borderlands,” as the “thin edge of barbwire” on which borderland peoples live, can possibly exist:

The work of mestiza consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended. The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts. A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence, of war. (80)

¹⁶ GMIII:23.

REVOLUTIONARY SELF-CRITIQUE

To embark upon a critique of everything existing is necessarily to critique oneself, both as part of that existence, and as beholden to it for one's own birth and life. This is a task that was much more difficult for Nietzsche than for Anzaldúa. Although Nietzsche recognizes that he himself is a product of the West he so devastatingly critiques, he is nevertheless unable to embrace the contradictions that are required in order to critique everything existing and yet affirm it. This is because he knows it will destroy his own position of authority within the existing social, cultural, and political order. A trained philologist in dialogue with some of the greatest philosophers of the 19th century, a European male witnessing radical social and political changes in class, race, and gender, and participating (if only indirectly) in the European project of Empire, Nietzsche has both a personal and a political connection to Truth. Giving up on it would mean giving up his position as a philosopher, his status as a man, and his dominant position as a colonizing European. It means that participants in the European feminist and labor movements or the "natives" abroad have subjectivities of their own, truths of their own, *contestatory* claims to truth which contradict the singularity of the given order.

Despite his own radical critique of truth, in other words, Nietzsche cannot ultimately surrender his desire for it because to do otherwise would dissolve his own power.¹⁷ Nietzsche's agony is the agony of one whose entire worldview is shattering, but *not* because of domination or coercion. Rather, it is shattering because Nietzsche is actually seeing it for what it is, and resisting the ultimate implication of that reality: namely, that power is contingent. There is, in fact, no imperative rooted in nature that specifies either the univocity of subjectivity or the universality of truth (or, in Ni-

etzsche's language, that sorts out clearly and distinguishes between the weak and the strong, the sick and the healthy). Instead, this epistemological purity is exposed as good old-fashioned *ideology*, in precisely Marx's sense—cloaked in the guise of "truth," the effects of power come to be seen as prior to it and justifying it, thereby legitimizing the singular subject and the universality of truth as features of the world that have been discovered there, rather than forced onto it. Such invisible "truths" are the prop of power everywhere, and form the basis of European, masculinist domination in particular.

Anzaldúa recognizes this problem, though of course from a different perspective. Although she is deeply critical of the structure of colonialism (both Spanish and Anglo) that has ravaged her people over and over again, a domination that is re-

¹⁷ It might seem odd to argue that Nietzsche, who spent most of his life alone, in bed, shut up in ascetic, attic-like quarters, and convulsed with nausea, "fits," and intermittent spells of blindness, was a powerful man, much less a prominent European politico or a philosophical authority. Even then no one paid much attention to his writings, which are to this day considered to be apolitical. Nevertheless, as I show in my manuscript-in-progress, *Nietzsche's Revolution*, Nietzsche's concerns that in modernity the sick and weak are triumphing over the healthy and strong are no mere metaphors, but rather very real and material concerns about the ascendance of European feminist and labor movements, the dissolution of "traditional" European family and gender role structures, and the specter of racial "mixing" and dilution of Aryan/European racial superiority. Indeed, there is substantial evidence in his texts that "decadence," his diagnosis of modernity, is a shorthand description of the very real slave moralities like socialism, democracy, feminism (or gender role confusion and reversal), pity, and equality, about which he complained specifically and consistently. Whether or not Nietzsche was concerned about *his own* national, racial, or patriarchal power withering away, nevertheless he is clearly concerned that the *dominant* national, racial, and patriarchal power was withering away, with which we can easily associate him. In either case, such agony bespeaks an indisputable conservatism, and a nostalgia for an oppressive yet disintegrating political order.

sponsible for the very creation of her borderland identity and people, nevertheless she is unafraid to document structures of domination in her own *cultura*:

...though 'home' permeates every sinew and cartilage in my body, I too am afraid of going home. Though I'll defend my race and culture when they are attacked by non-mexicanos, *conosco el malestar de mi cultura*. I abhor some of my culture's ways, how it cripples its women, *como burras*, our strengths used against us, lowly *burras* bearing humility with dignity...I abhor how my culture makes macho caricatures of its men. No, I do not buy all the myths of the tribe into which I was born...I will not glorify those aspects of my culture which have injured me and which have injured me in the name of protecting me. (21-22)

Seizing on the contrast of action and reaction (a contrast that holds similar appeal for Nietzsche), Anzaldúa asserts that despite the sense that outrage and injustice are everywhere and cannot be surmounted, or can only be addressed through a radical discourse of utter opposition, it is important to resist this oppositional desire. One must not remain content simply to react to the domination one critiques:

[I]t is not enough to stand on the opposite river bank, shouting questions, challenging patriarchal, white conventions. A counterstance locks one into a duel of oppressor and oppressed; locked in mortal combat, like the cop and the criminal, both are reduced to a common denominator of violence. The counterstance refutes the dominant culture's views and beliefs, and, for this, it is proudly defiant.

All reaction is limited by, and dependent on, what it is reacting against. Because the counterstance stems from a problem with authority—outer as well as inner—it's a step towards liberation from cultural domination. *But it is not a way of life*. At some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal combatants somehow healed so that we are on both shores at once and, at once, see through serpent and eagle eyes. ...The possibilities are numerous once we decide to act and not react. (78-9, emphasis added)

The task, then, for revolutionaries, is not simply to tear down—not simply to “react” or shout questions in the same idiom as that which one seeks to overturn. Anzaldúa illustrates the impossibility of this position, wherein she is rejected by racist, sexist Anglo and sexist, homophobic Chicano culture, and she similarly rejects patriarchal Anglo, Chicano, and Indian cultural practices. This reaction is a necessary moment, but it is unsustainable as “a way of life.” Thus the revolutionary task is not to tear down, but to construct the new *from the material of the old*. Only then can the new become a way of life, and not merely a reactionary moment in an unproductive standoff between oppressor and oppressed.

The alternative way of life Anzaldúa offers is the development of mestiza consciousness. By contrast, Nietzsche largely refuses the political challenge his own critique of truth invites, retreating from the task of fostering the necessarily hybrid forms of life that must emerge from his own revolutionary attempt to transform modernity. Infrequently, however, in rare glimpses of a possible future, Nietzsche recommends laughter as the key to a truly affirmative yet deeply critical existence: “Precisely because we are at bottom grave

and serious human beings—really, more weights than human beings—nothing does us as much good as a fool’s cap: we need it in relation to ourselves.”¹⁸ To be able to laugh at something suggests, as Nietzsche indicates, that one does not take it seriously; that it is silly, inconsequential. To do so in relation to oneself is a task that Nietzsche suggests no one has sufficiently accomplished: “To laugh at oneself as one would have to laugh in order to laugh out of the whole truth—to do that even the best so far lacked sufficient sense for the truth, and the most gifted had too little genius for that.”¹⁹

This was certainly a task even Nietzsche himself was not “gifted” enough to accomplish. Although Nietzsche enjoys laughing at the expense of other philosophers, he is in general unable to laugh at himself (Blondel 1999, 172). While Nietzsche may be unique among Western European philosophers in his deep self-interrogation regarding his own investment in the will to truth, a questioning more psychological and more profoundly personal than the self-questioning of Descartes or Kant, nevertheless his investment in truth is clearly not one that he could finally relinquish. He left it to others to take up this task, perhaps because he could not face what might emerge from an affirmation of a decadent modernity.²⁰ I think we can read the work of María Lugones as doing just this in her suggestions of what she calls playful “world”-travel. Moreover, Lugones’s work on playfulness explains why it might have been so difficult for Nietzsche to take his own suggestions; namely, that recognition of multiplicity is difficult and terrifying specifically for those with the most to lose from its acknowledgment.

¹⁸ GS 107.

¹⁹ GS 1.

²⁰ And it is very clear that what Nietzsche most feared was the emergence of a distinctly *feminist* form of life, one that challenged traditional gender roles, sexual norms, and boundaries of propriety. I take this issue up in detail in *Nietzsche’s Revolution*.

REDEEMING NIETZSCHE: PLAYFUL CRITIQUE AND “WORLD”-TRAVEL

Fifteen years ago, in an essay addressed explicitly to white/Angla feminists, Lugones asked to see “plurality in the very structure of a theory” (2003, 74). When this plurality is absent, Lugones says she knows that she will have to do “lots of acrobatics—like a contortionist or tight-rope walker,” in order to prevent that theory from distorting her “in all her complexity” (74). Lugones was not, however, concerned with being represented accurately; indeed, she is not concerned with representation at all. For Lugones, there is no such thing as accurate representation, because there is no such thing as a complete or whole depiction of all of the different “selves” she animates. Such depiction is impossible because Lugones does not *command* all of her “selves”—she does not intentionally or freely animate all of them, nor is she aware of how many of them there are. Indeed, Lugones explicitly rejects the American/Western conceptualization of the self as singular, autonomous, conscious, intentional, and more or less in control over not only its own existence, but also others’ perceptions of its existence.

This “theory” regarding the self is not a by-product of abstract reflection. As is also the case for Anzaldúa, this multiplicity is clear to Lugones because of its very practical causes and implications—because she is an immigrant woman of color in the U.S., living outside the racist construction of the “mainstream.” Lugones documents the “double consciousness” that is the essential survival strategy of those relegated by racism to the margins of American life, a relegation Anzaldúa notes can give a woman of color “*loquería*, the crazies” (19; cf. Matsuda 1996, 5). This double- or multiple-consciousness is what makes Lugones a “world”-traveler. This ability is a necessary skill all outsiders develop if they are to live

and flourish outside the mainstream:

[T]he outsider has necessarily acquired flexibility in shifting from the mainstream construction of life where she is constructed as an outsider to other constructions of life where she is more or less “at home.” This flexibility is necessary for the outsider. It is required by the logic of oppression. (2004, 77)

Lugones continues by saying that this “world”-traveling “can also be exercised resistantly by the outsider *or* by those who are at ease in the mainstream.” She recommends that this strategy of resistance be taken up by both outsiders and insiders, and that it be “animated by an attitude that I describe as playful” (2004, 77; emphasis added).

“World”-traveling, or what she elsewhere refers to as “the interactive step” among women (69), is what Lugones sees as missing from white/Angla feminist theorizing in the U.S. It is missing because of a failure on the part of white/Angla feminists to see, interact with, and lovingly perceive U.S. women of color. This blindness, this failure of identification, is the flipside of “the logic of oppression.” If U.S. women of color must develop multiple consciousness in order to travel between and among multiple “worlds,” the singularity of white women’s selfhood and their ease in the world of the (feminist and/or white) mainstream dictate that there is no need for them to develop multiple consciousness. White/Angla feminists remain singular, autonomous, and undivided. This unity is the gift of privilege.

Lugones suggests that “world”-traveling, or “interaction,” can only happen when white/Angla women come to *see* women of color. But not only this. They must also come to see themselves *as women of color see them*. In this act of identification, white/Angla women may realize what

women of color have known all along—that they, too, are multiple selves, over which they do not exercise complete control, and which they animate regardless of their desire to do so, and regardless of their own self-conceptualizations. Lugones is not saying that understanding oppression is as easy as “flipping a switch” and walking in someone else’s shoes (as Kelly Oliver [2001, 53] mistakenly claims). Rather, she is saying that by realizing that the “universal” perspective of “women” is in fact one of many perspectives, indeed a particular one, white women will come to recognize their own multiplicity. It may even cause them to identify with women of color, albeit not in the traditional, universalizing way, nor through the white U.S. feminist romanticization of “sisterhood.” “World”-traveling denies the possibility of connection through sameness. It is more challenging—and thus more rewarding—than simply naming all women “women.” “World”-traveling allows white women to identify with women of color *as* multiple, as precisely *not* the same. This identification is not a colonization, but rather a recognition of sameness in the shared condition of multiplicity.

When Nietzsche argues that “objectivity” means proliferating the number of “affects” allowed to speak or “eyes” allowed to observe, he offers us the beginnings of what is more clearly and substantively explained by Lugones as “world”-traveling. “World”-traveling is Lugones’s attempt to re-think identification such that it does not depend on sameness at all (85). Rather, it involves “the shift from being one person to being a different person,” which may be neither “willful” nor “conscious” (89). It means “being a different person in different ‘worlds’ and yet of having memory of oneself as different without quite having the sense of there being any underlying ‘I’” (89). There is no enduring or core “self” that can be said to present itself in various “worlds;” rather, whatever can appear in

these multiple “worlds” is what constitutes the self. “Worlds” construct selves, in other words, not the other way around.

Lugones’s notion of a “world” is not exactly a Nietzschean perspective, although a “world” may have something in common with Anzaldúa’s borderlands. A “world” is a “construction of life,” a construction that is neither utopian nor fictional, but may not necessarily correspond with an empirically existing society. It may “be an actual society,” but a “world” can also “be such a society given a nondominant, a resistant construction, or it can be such a society or a society given an idiosyncratic construction” (87). Of especial significance is that I am not in control of all the possible “worlds” there are, nor am I in control of which worlds I am in or how I am constructed there. I may recognize myself in these worlds or I may not, and I may claim some and not others, but regardless of my recognition or consent or “ease” in these “worlds,” I nevertheless animate the self that is constructed in them.

Regarding the metaphysical status of “worlds,” Lugones notes: “In describing my sense of a ‘world,’ I am offering a description of experience, something that is true to experience even if it is ontologically problematic” (89). Here we see the same revolutionary move we saw in Nietzsche and Anzaldúa, made explicitly materialist in Lugones’s description. In demanding that “theory” be accountable to the lived experience of women of color’s multiplicity and experience of domination, Lugones is suggesting a new standard for what counts as truth. For the demand for coherence, unity, or ontologically sound descriptions of existence may not only contradict our experience of existence, it may in fact be an attempt to subjugate existence in order to render it intelligible and livable to us. Such subjugation is not only a subjugation of “life,” as Nietzsche argues. As Anzaldúa points out, such subjugation is also an active domination and oppression of existing

and living people. Lugones and Anzaldúa thus suggest a new mode of evaluation that concretizes the abstractions of Nietzschean perspectivism.²¹

“World”-traveling is a project many white feminist have resisted. This is because such a journey would mean, for white women, coming face to face with their own privilege, since “world”-traveling facilitates their seeing “*what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes*” (97). But this risk must be taken, for as Lugones argues, “Only when we have traveled to each other’s ‘worlds’ are we fully subjects to each other” (97). Of course, Nietzsche’s resistance to “pity” and his disdain for the “herd” of humankind would necessarily prevent him from engaging in “world”-travel—his whole project is premised on denying the subjectivity of the majority of humankind. How, then, to encourage “world”-traveling on the part of those most likely to resist it? In order to change configurations of power, after all, those who have it must be divested of it.

Part of the appeal of “world”-travel is its side-stepping of the structure of attack and guilt-laden defense that has characterized so many feminist quarrels about race, making it a safer space for white women to unlearn racism. The key to its success is an attitude Lugones calls “playfulness,” consisting of four different kinds of openness: openness to surprise, to being a fool, to “self-construction or re-construction of the ‘worlds’ we inhabit,” and to “risk the ground that constructs us as oppressors or as oppressed” (96). These deeply inter-related opennesses translate playfulness as, in part, an attitude of willingness to surrender the belief in one’s own integrity—as

²¹ It also superimposes a decidedly leftist set of consequences on Nietzsche’s critique of truth, a conclusion he would in no way endorse, but which I think can nevertheless be coherently argued to follow from his philosophy. I say much more about Nietzsche’s inadvertent sanction of progressive political projects in *Nietzsche’s Revolution*.

singular, as whole, as familiar; as innocent, good, smart, in control. Such a terrifying surrender is aided most by the openness to being a fool. This aspect of playfulness addresses the riskiness of “world”-travel by offering a Nietzschean-inspired laughter and self-mockery as a means of easing the journey. For it is not *simply* a loss of privilege that explains the resistance to “world”-travel, but also a fear of being ridiculous, of not being “at ease” in these other “worlds,” despite (one hopes!) good intentions. Lugones is saying that this lack of ease is not to be resisted or feared—it is to be relished, laughed at, played with. She notes that openness to being a fool can be stated in the negative as a “lack of self-importance.” Indeed, when taken in the negative, all of the openesses Lugones describes as being part of playfulness become relevant to those who resist “world”-travel: undertaken genuinely, it demands risking one’s ground and surrendering one’s own self-importance, “not worrying about competence” and refusing an investment in the sacredness of rules (96).

To risk one’s own identity in this way, to be able to laugh at yourself and have others laugh with you, is the beginning and foundation of what Lugones calls “loving perception.” It involves an identification of oneself with others, a recognition of one’s interconnectedness with and dependence on them, without thereby becoming either their slave or their master. It thus has the capacity to overthrow the structures of domination Anzaldúa and Lugones critique (and in which Nietzsche has zero interest), but also to re-fashion the very meaning of overthrow itself (a task in which Nietzsche had very much interest, but little success). Playfulness, in other words, is a tool for divesting the powerful of their privilege in a productive, non-moralizing, and loving way.

Playfulness is also the useful and necessary attitude for the revolutionary critic herself. The non-purposiveness of “play,”

and the risk involved in allowing oneself to be a fool are precisely what is demanded by the over-serious, self-important, sometimes righteous revolutionary. In order for resistance to remain productive, it must be undertaken with an attitude of playfulness: “this sense of playfulness is one that one may exercise in resistance to oppression when resistance is not reducible to reaction. Nonreactive resistance is creative; it *exceeds* that which is being resisted” (99, emphasis added). This is a subtle recognition of how revolutionary critique always runs the risk of becoming reactionary, of re-instating the very authority it critiques. But “The creation of new meaning lies *outside* of rules, particularly the rules of the ‘world’ being resisted” (99, emphasis added). Playfulness—as opposed to hostility, anger, or resentment—is what allows such disregard for rules, and fosters the creativity necessary to produce new meaning. Its character as loving is what allows the critic to divest herself of self-importance in a context that is safe. The result is the forging of what Lugones calls “deep coalition” (98), an alliance with the power to change oppressive conditions, because it can facilitate safe, loving, non-moralizing change in the oppressors themselves.

I think Lugones’s explication of playfulness fills out what is only gestured at and implicit in Nietzsche’s thinking. Her recommendation of “world”-travel as a strategy of political resistance makes possible Nietzsche’s desire to live joyfully within the terms of contradiction without being torn apart by them. As both Nietzsche and Anzaldúa know, *mestiza* consciousness and perspectivism constitute ways of living that, although new, are beholden to everything they reject, without which they could not exist. This means that there is no such thing as pure revolution, understood as the birth of the radically new. There is *only* reaction—no action stands divorced or autonomous from that which came before it and rendered it possible. The revolutionary

question is thus *how* to react. Nietzsche and Anzaldúa offer us substantive suggestions in this regard. They suggest we react not through reversal, not through switching the old god for a new one, but rather through an embrace of multiple gods, and a recognition that new gods must be created as the old ones die off. Lugones offers us the attitude and strategy for the addressees of such reaction—playful “world”-travel.

This new thinking and doing is itself a revolution—in the very idea and possibility of revolution itself. Taken together, Nietzsche, Anzaldúa, and Lugones thus challenge us to re-think the very idea of political transformation, and to make real revolution possible.

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Except where indicated below, all citations from Nietzsche are taken from the Kaufmann translations, and are referenced in the text by the following abbreviations:

BT *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music* (New York: Vintage, 1967)

D *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1997.

GS *The Gay Science: la gaya scienza* (New York: Vintage, 1974)

Z *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None* (New York: Penguin, 1954)

BGE *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (New York: Vintage, 1966)

GM *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic* (New York: Vintage, 1967)

TI *Twilight of the Idols, or How One Philosophizes with a Hammer* (in *The Portable Nietzsche*, New York: Penguin, 1968)

A *The Antichrist(ian)* (in *The Portable Nietzsche*, New York: Penguin, 1968)

EH *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is* (New York: Vintage, 1967)