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***Curanderismo* as Decolonization Therapy:
The Acceptance of *Mestizaje* as a *Remedio***

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Abstract

“*Curanderismo* as Decolonization Therapy: The Acceptance of *Mestizaje* as a *Remedio*” explores Chicana/o identity and its many manifestations that reflect cultural patterns of *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* based on historical, literary, anthropological and political interpretations. The ideology and use of *mestizaje* or the biological mixture of races is an evolving process as historical and contemporary theoreticians and researchers grapple with whether *mestizaje* has been a process of “national homogenization and of hiding a reality of racist exclusion behind a mask of inclusiveness” (Wade, 2005) or, with a redefinition and re-conceptualization, if it has value and utility in a changing world. The dichotomies imbedded in *mestizaje* regarding other/otherness, sameness/difference and inclusion/exclusion have yet to be reconciled. Authors define decolonization therapy as “a healing process, a space where wounded spirits and souls from disenfranchised racial groups recover from historical trauma, racism, and other collective social ills caused by the long term negative effects of colonization.” Authors argue that *curanderismo* can be one method used to decolonize our minds, bodies and spirits. *Curanderismo* can be a spiritual cleansing process, an acceptance of self, a recognition and deconstruction of the multiple historical identities that are often used by the dominating culture as pseudo-schizophrenic states and split/dual personalities, causing consternation and self-hate. Authors argue that whether one defines herself/himself as a *mestiza/o* or identifies with his/her indigenous roots, one has to be driven to love oneself. As much as one might struggle with erasing the negative experiences of being *mestiza/o*, for some, it is a reality. To simply deny it; is to deny oneself. It is to erase oneself from humanity. Authors propose that healing through psychological acceptance of one’s identity may be one of the pathways to ameliorating this conflict. Finding this third space, or what Gloria Anzaldúa terms “*nepantla*” has been challenging. Authors argue that *curanderismo* can be a *remedio* when entering that third space.

Introduction: Darkness, Repression, Civilization

If there is a sickness in the American soul, it may have been generated as early as the seventeenth century with the Puritanical invention of the shadow self.¹ This shadow self corresponds to that “psychosexual complex” which emerged as part of the Western Civilizational construction of the “generic native, that despised, earthy, animalic, suppressed ‘shadow self’ projected by the Western mind” (Drinnon 1997, xxvii). For Chicana women, nearly four centuries later, the shadow self of Puritanical control exists as the imposing power of masculinist control; or as Bernice Zamora asserts in her 1976 book of poems, *Restless Serpents*, “You insult me/When you say I’m/Schizophrenic./My Divisions are/Infinite” (quoted in Saldívar 1997, 64). In her first book of poetry, as Saldívar suggests, Zamora “proposes a radical and complex critique of Western male power in social, cultural, psychoanalytic, and literary discourse” (1997, 63). We propose then, that a repressive discursive logic, focused toward the dark skinned other, was birthed on the North American continent and morphed Western Civilization toward its racializing, oppressive purpose.

The sickness that results, we argue, is twofold in its character: the oppressed, as well as the oppressor, suffer from the projection of this shadow self. By creating and masking a shadow self, a new nation forms a darkness about themselves; they may, in turn, project the darkness outwards. Not revealing one’s self or masking a disavowed interiority creates a self-blindness. This constructed self-opacity finds its way to the projected other, especially when the other is easily identified and demarcated by skin color, the most identifiable feature of otherness.² A society or nation that builds its own darkness, so to speak, has a troubling outcome, as Cavell explains, “when we keep ourselves in the dark, the consequence is that we convert the other into a character and make the world a stage for him” (2003, 104). A doubly layered, century’s old sickness has thus taken hold of North America, creating an embattled bitter struggle of opposing psyches of origins.

Statelessness, Nation State, State Violence

Within the formation of nation states, then, we suggest that the drawing of international borders on contiguous continental terrain presents a unique set of civilizational challenges. The

¹ We are borrowing here from Richard Drinnon’s identification and analysis of “God’s Afflicted Saints” in his *Facing West*, (1997), on University of Oklahoma Press.

² Here we are indebted to Cavell’s 1967 essay, “The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of King Lear,” reprinted in Cavell, (2003), pp. 39-123.

construction of boundaries, and the subsequent nation state, can create citizens but can also cross territories where people had already established themselves as a people. Such is the case in the American Southwest after the U.S.-Mexico War in 1848. As a result of the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, an area two and one-half times the size of France became U.S. territory. Previously it was Mexico, and prior to independence in 1810, it was the remote northern region of New Spain. Additionally, the territory, at least since the beginning of the 1500s, has been home to numerous diverse indigenous peoples who managed to maintain a cohesive identity to the present day. The American Southwest thus, subject to its conflictive history for over 500 years, has produced a liminal people throughout this period, “liminal people who have not moved physically sometimes find that state boundaries have shifted, and the protections that citizenship were thought to provide suddenly evaporate” (Kerber 2005, 729).

Hence, when boundaries are drawn and citizenship is granted to a limited population within the nation’s jurisdiction thereby creating a minority population where a minority population did not exist prior to the construction of the nation state; a minority, liminal other is thus formed *as part of* the construction of the nation state. Originally expounded upon by Arendt in her *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt noted the precarious validity of the European nation state after World War II as the Peace and Minority Treaties attempted to establish nations in a shattered Eastern Europe.³ The creation of minorities, within a nation state, would have grave consequences, as Arendt was aware, “[t]he treaties lumped together many peoples in a single government, silently assumed that others ... were equal partners in the government, which of course they were not” (1973, 270). The creation of minorities without rights, or limited rights, would prove disastrous for Southeastern Europe as the twentieth century closed its final chapter on WWII in the Balkans in the 1990s. In her prescient brilliance, Arendt anticipated twenty first century struggles with respect to ‘created’ minorities within the nation state, “[t]he representatives of the great nations knew only too well that minorities within nation-states must sooner or later be either assimilated or liquidated” (1973, 273).

This liminal status is thus a byproduct of the creation of two nation states in North America, the United States and Mexico; moreover, and perhaps more relevant is the assimilation-liquidation-determination status of this region. While the historical antecedent which gives rise to this border ‘problem’ remains opaque and disavowed, the relevancy of border relations remains the salient public policy issue of the moment. Since both nations share a nearly

³ See Chapter 9, pp. 267-302 of Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1973).

two thousand mile border, which was ‘created’ in 1848, these liminal peoples remain in a precarious status within the American Southwest to this day. It is the state, then, which realizes its power and identity by creating and maintaining a secure border, “the concrete reality of the U.S.-Mexico border reminds us of this move’s limitations by providing a dramatic display of state power that reinforces territorial integrity and nationalism” (Volk and Schlotterbeck 2010, 584). The limitation of the creation of the nation state is thus demonstrated as this contested border space comes under constant scrutiny and assault as ‘aliens’ attempt to cross the region and enforcement agencies attempt to control the international boundary. Enforcing the territoriality of the nation state, nevertheless, becomes paramount when the nation may sense a threat to its borders. Throughout the twentieth century, the U.S.-Mexico border has been subject to inconsistent border enforcement; however, since 9/11 a renewed fervor of border integrity is in demand. Literally, the U.S. may sense a threat to the integrity of its survival thereby compelling itself to develop a vigorous practice of border enforcement. Foucault reminds us that state governance corresponds to the life of the state, “to govern according to the principle of *raison d’État*⁴ is to arrange things so that the state becomes sturdy and permanent, so that it becomes wealthy, and so that it becomes strong in the face of everything that may destroy it” (2008, 4).

Minorities—Enemy Within

Created minorities then, by definition, but especially when illegally crossing international borders, pose a symbolic threat to the established, mythic origins of a nation. For the United States, a constant flow of minority populations—dark skinned peoples—places the nation in a representative flux. The nation knows, for example, that 22 million of its inhabitants are migrants while at least one-half of these are without legal documentation. Many, if not most of these 11 million are easily identified as dark skinned peoples, or at least people from a different culture or national origin. The ‘enemy,’ so to speak, for the United States, is found within the social body and must either be assimilated or destroyed. Rather than annihilating the racialized other, borderland frontiers are now the site of social and political domination, “violence is an excrescence growing out of the former circles of domination, and relating to membership ... its target falls at the edges of social categories and upon an enemy constructed within the social body when a clarification of its border is needed” (Fradinger 2010, 247). Liminality can thus be

⁴ Reason of state.

constructed by the nation state to affirm and secure its borders. A border in crisis needs to make a distinction between who belongs and who does not belong, “[i]t is the friend whose difference is manufactured in times of crisis to be placed in a liminal space, between the outside and inside, in order to differentiate the interior and the exterior whose borders have been thrown into crisis” (Fradinger 2010, 247). Liminality can now be cast in a double flux: a minority population may assert its liminal space as a challenge to the imposed construction of the nation state, but the nation state may, in turn, use this liminality as an identifying characteristic to determine who belongs within the nation’s territory and who does not.

Anzaldúa’s Liminality and *Curanderismo*

Given this potential of double-writing configuration then, Anzaldúa’s liminality, in order to advance itself as a radical political project, must find its way to signifying the nation as ‘objectively’ heterogeneous. This difference, then, between a pedagogical and performative signification is best articulated by Bhabha. The pedagogical object, as the people of the nation, describes the “people as an a priori historical presence” while the people as performative narrative places the people as “its enunciatory ‘present’ marked in the repetition and pulsation of the national sign” (1994, 211). “The pedagogical founds its narrative authority in a tradition of the people,” as Bhabha explains; it is self-generating “encapsulated in a succession of historical moments” (1994, 211). The performative, however, interrupts this self-generating process “by casting a shadow between the people as ‘image’ and its signification as a differentiating sign of Self, distinct from the Other of the Outside” (1994, 212). Here again, as shown with the Puritans’ casting of a shadow self, the performative signification in the twenty first century is ‘interested’ in projecting a shadow to draw a distinction of the nation’s people as ‘image’ rather than as a historically articulated presence in the nation. The performative denies history while the pedagogical seeks to place an objectively definable historical people in the nation. The performative creates, with its emphasis on ‘image’ and ‘signing’ of the Self and Other, the space for a politics of death, death by removal in the case of the nation state. In order to ensure its survival, the other will not be granted citizenship, instead a necropolitics is fulfilled by the “‘making disappear’ of the other” (Fradinger 2010, 247). Creating nonhumans, as Fradinger explains is the goal of necropolitics, “this political production of death may be the practice of killing *in place of* inscribing the other as an equal” (her emphasis, 2010, 247). Liminality here is used to identify the other and, as the state enacts its practice of necropolitics, those classified

with a liminal status become the targets of social and political domination. Given the threat to its survival as a nation since 9/11, the United States ‘shadows’ the people of the land as image and differentiated self. This creates the basis for the twenty first century, or “modern excrescences of violence, leaping out of the dialectic between the violence of institutionalized power versus the violence of insurgency” (Fradinger 2010, 246). Fradinger call this violence “binding violence” since the nation determines its “political fraternity” on “foundational violence” (2010, 247).

Finally, then, if minority peoples, as Anzaldúa suggests, act as liminal strategists subjectivizing and conceptualizing a third space or status for themselves, along with the nation’s self-splitting *It/Self* thereby allowing the performative signification of ‘shadow casting’ in creating an enemy-other, is this “double-writing or dissemi-*nation*” as Bhabha calls it, a moment of cultural liminality thus making way for Williams’ emergent and residual forms?⁵ For Bhabha, this double-writing creates the *cultural* liminality where a “non-metaphysical, non-subjectivist” mode of explanation may take hold. Williams explains dominant, residual and emergent in relation to culture as the “central system of practices, meaning and values, which we can properly call dominant and effective” as the dominant realm (2005, 38). The residual is the location of “some experiences, meanings and values, which cannot be verified or cannot be expressed in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practiced on the basis of residue—cultural as well as social—of some previous social formation” (2005, 40); while the emergent are the ‘new meanings and values, new practices, new significances and experiences, [that] are continually being created’ (2005, 41). Williams admits that no dominant culture is totally exhaustive yet opposition to the dominant culture is “approached or attacked” (2005, 43). For Williams, there exists the space for “alternative and oppositional, that is to say between someone who simply finds a different way to live and wishes to be left alone ... and someone who finds a different way to live and wants to change the society” (2005, 41-42). As these alternatives develop into practical forms and are received in a public forum, a new objective and representative public space can be formed. Thus an individual project, such as Anzaldúa’s *Mestizaje* or the work of *curanderismo*, could find their way, given a common resemblance of form, toward a collective mode of action.

⁵ See Raymond Williams’ *Culture and Materialism: Selected Essays*, (2005), New York, Verso, especially “Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory,” pp. 31-49.

Mestizaje Redefined

The ideology and use of *mestizaje* or the biological mixture of races is an evolving process as historical and contemporary theoreticians and researchers grapple with whether *mestizaje* has been a process of “national homogenization and of hiding a reality of racist exclusion behind a mask of inclusiveness” (Wade, 2005) or, with a redefinition and re-conceptualization, if it has value and utility in a modern world. The dichotomies imbedded in *mestizaje* regarding sameness/difference, other/otherness and inclusion/exclusion have yet to be reconciled. Authors propose that healing through psychological acceptance of one’s identity may be one of the pathways to ameliorating this conflict. Finding this third space, or what Gloria Anzaldúa terms “*nepantla*” has been challenging. Anzaldúa (1998, p. 165) defines *nepantla* as, “the *Nahuatl* word for an in-between state, that uncertain terrain one crosses when moving from one place to another, when changing from one class, race or gender position to another, when traveling from the present identity into a new identity.” She offers the contemporary Mexican immigrant experience when crossing physical borders; therefore, leading to crossing other metaphorical borders as an example of this phenomenon.

Authors will explore Chicana/o identity development and its many manifestations that reflect cultural patterns of *mestizaje* based on psychological, historical, literary, and anthropological interpretations. They will argue that a reinvention and rebirth, of *mestizaje* in a modern society have the potential to convert into forms of decolonization therapy, a road to healing and acceptance of self, eventually resulting to re-self discovery and cultural pride. Authors define decolonization therapy as a healing process a space where wounded spirits and souls from disenfranchised racial groups recover from historical trauma, racism, and other collective social ills caused by the long-term negative effects of colonization. It is a spiritual cleansing process, an acceptance of self, a recognition and acceptance of the multiple historical identities that are often characterized by the dominating culture as pseudo-schizophrenic states and split/dual personalities, causing consternation and self-hate. Authors argue that whether one defines herself/himself as a *mestiza/o* or identifies with his/her indigenous roots, one has to be driven to love oneself. As much as one might imagine, erasing the negative experience of being *mestiza/o*; for some, it is a reality. To simply deny it; is to deny oneself. It is to erase oneself from humanity.

Authors will develop a critical historical analysis of *mestizaje* utilizing secondary sources in redefining *mestizaje* as it is transformed into a tool for emotional and psychological healing

and emancipation purposes. The essay also offers an exploration into indigenous, feminist and culturally relevant research methodologies that uncover an array of different perspectives that oppose dominant forms of methodology and offer alternative perspectives to *nuestra experiencia*, our experience. Additionally, *curanderismo* is offered as a culturally relevant oppositional *remedio* (remedy) perceived as antithetical to dominant forms of psychotherapy and healing.

As long as Chicanas/os continue to accept the definitions, labels and semiotics imposed upon them by colonizers that transmogrify them into fungible commodities whose labor is continuously exploited, with adverse effects upon the collective psychology of the group, its members will continue to falter into subaltern statuses. Acceptance of the Master's paradigm as superior with its negative manifestations upon the group is, at least, partially responsible for the subliminal internalization of how Chicanas/os often perceive themselves. For Chicanas/os, to view themselves through the warped lenses of the dominant society, has led to low group and/or individual self-esteem. Until members of *La Raza*, or a generic term defined as "the People," reclaim their own identity and learn self-love, continued psychological deterioration will linger in its collective consciousness. Note that acceptance of self should not include denial of the many racial mixtures that constitute *el mestizaje*. Internalized racial hierarchy can also be covered by a denial/acceptance dichotomy that can be self-destructive.

Historical Racial and Social Stratification

Nations develop a collective historical identity leaving their legacies behind for the next generation; for *La Raza* it has been a constant struggle. *La Raza* has suffered from a *casta* (caste) system, referred to as racial stratification since the 15th century following conquest and colonization by the Spaniards. Color consciousness via the concepts of *Gachupín* (a frequently pejorative term for a Spaniard born in Spain), *Criollo/a* (a Spaniard born in New Spain, supposedly of pure blood) and *Mestiza/o* (the mixture of Indian and Spaniard) was strategically implanted in the collective unconscious of *La Raza*, as white privilege was protected within the structures of colonial Spain. These conceptual vestiges were reinforced in Mexico, following its independence from Spain in 1810-21. They became part and parcel of Chicanas/os, following the Mexican-American War of 1846-48, as Chicanas/os were colonized a second time by the United States of America. The concepts of *el güero* (Chicana/o with light complexion), *el moreno* (Chicana/o with café complexion) and *el prieto* (Chicana/o with dark complexion) were used as

internal forms of oppression between and among group members as color consciousness invaded and settled as a permanent part of the collective consciousness in American society. In some sense, racial stratification manifested in psychological terms was translated into the development of an internalized *casta* system.

Mexican Americans struggled with identity issues, often succumbing to the images created by the master narrative. Denial became a defense mechanism shielding *La Raza* from further pain and suffering as this group struggled for acceptance in a color conscious society. As a centrifugal force, denial caused anxiety and confusion about identity. Denial can manifest itself in many forms. According to Dulitzky (2005), there are at least three types of denial: “literal denial (nothing has happened); interpretive denial (what is happening is actually something else); and justificatory denial (what’s happening is justified)” (2005, p. 40).

Color consciousness and negative forms of *machismo* (exaggerated manliness, sexism) plagued our communities during *El Movimiento* (the Chicana/o Movement) as we sought out *La Raza*’s true identities. Many Chicanas/os experienced internalized racism that is, looking at your own group through the eyes of the dominant society and continued to deny their particular historical experiences regarding indigenous and African ancestors. Yearning to be white and internalizing the image of the Master has led to self-depreciation. The challenge of accepting ourselves, irrespective if one was a *güero*, *moreno* or *prieto* is startling, let alone having to grapple with the history of blackness in *La Raza*’s history. Rhetorical assertion of inclusion has persisted as blackness was erased and blacks were marginalized. Vaughn (2001) states that, “These encounters with blackness highlight for Black Mexicans the limits of nationalist conception of *mestizaje*.” This is further elaborated upon by Dzidzienyo and Oboler who argue that racial stratification and hierarchy played themselves out as racial classification systems developed. The authors mention “fourteen commonly cited categories such as **negro**, **mulato**, **morisco**, **albino**, **negro torneatras**, *español*, *castizo*, *Mestizo*, *indio*, **coyote**, **tente en el aire**, **cambujo**, **chino and lobo**, ten of them (in boldface) involved some degree of Black ancestry” (2009, p. 133).

When socio-political stratification was coupled with racial stratification and used against *La Raza*, the recipe for colonization became *fait accompli*, seemingly irreversible. Historical negation of self for Chicanas/os became a destructive pattern via a conquest resulting in *mestizaje* wherein indigenous populations become slaves to the historical *encomienda* and *repartimiento* systems which were labor systems that exploited the indigenous population for

over 300 years. The other conquest, namely the Mexican American War, resulted in loss of *la tierra* (the land) further estrangement from a collective identity and cultural conflict as *Raza* became victims of economic control under American capitalism.

Cultural destruction and revival were processes that *La Raza* experienced throughout history as they struggled for identity. Sanchez (1993, p. 8) argues that cultures are summarily contested. He states, “This on-going struggle for a sense of self is made all the more difficult in an environment of social and political consciousness informed by a popular culture that distorts indigenous culture and seeks to define the identity of the ‘other’.” This quasi-analytical desire on the part of the superordinate group throughout Latin America was clearly manifested in popular *novelas indigenistas* or Indianist novels of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Interestingly, these works by descendants of the original colonizers draw heavily on the influence of both the European Romantic and Realist movements, which were closely intertwined. As Franco explains, “Discussion of Realism often displaces interest from manner of writing to theme, and inevitably discussion of realism tends to become thematic. In Spanish America, moreover, Realist theme was often Romantic theme reversed. Idealisation of the noble savage is Romantic in inspiration. Realism dwells on the degenerate condition of the contemporary Indian” (1973, p. 79).

Any accurate representation of identity struggles was largely absent in *la novela indigenista*, which purported to champion the cause of the oppressed. Indigenous tribes living in Mesoamerica for centuries before the arrival of Europeans developed magnificent cultures and possessed strong collective identities. They struggled against strong and omnipresent opposing forces during colonization. Once the conquerors institutionalized cultural genocide, identities were lost and tribes became disconnected from their *raíces* (roots). In theory, *mestizaje* was intended to heal; in practice, it destroyed. Anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (1996) refers to *mestizaje* as De-Indianization and suggests that it is used to deprive populations of their identity. One of its outcomes is a denial of historical continuity. As he further states, “De-Indianization has been called, “mixture [*mestizaje*], but it really was, and is ethnocide.”

Ethnocide and eradication of the individual were also carried out in the *indigenista* literature of Latin America. The 1889 novel, *Aves sin nido* (*Birds Without Nests*), by the Peruvian author Clorinda Matto de Turner (1854-1909) is generally acknowledged as the first work in a genre that fails to acknowledge the individuality of an Indian or *mestizo* character. Enrique Anderson-Imbert wrote that Matto de Turner “is noted for her boldness in bringing to

the novel the formulas of Indian liberation put forth by González Prada” (1969, p. 334). *Aves sin nido* was in fact very successful in garnering sympathy for the plight of Andean Indians suffering exploitation from landowners and the clergy. However, it fails to recognize the *mestizo* protagonists, Manuel and Margarita (lovers initially ignorant of the fact that they are half-brother and half-sister) as members of “a culturally differentiated group.”

The question of *mestizaje* is explored further in the 1935 novel, *En las calles*, by the Ecuadoran Jorge Icaza (1906-1978). The protagonist is a *cholo* (defined here as part *indio* and part *español*) and “is seen as a potential element of progress, not because he is more admirable than the Indian, but because he is more of an individualist, more concerned with personal advancement” (Franco, p. 164). This celebration of the European ideals of individualism and ambition serves to further negate Indian culture.

Chicana/o marginalization became the norm following the Mexican American War as Americanization Policy was institutionalized in an effort to de-Mexicanize *Mestiza/o* people of the Southwest (Mirandé, 2005). “True” *indigenismo*, defined as protecting and respecting indigenous cultures, was routinely negated throughout history. Political and economic historian James D. Cockcroft (1998) states, “*indigenismo* served the purpose of undermining Indian culture and integrating Mexico’s Indians into the national and international economy.” Historian Marcela Lagarde (1974) pointed out that the INI programs were “directed and planned by anthropologists who proclaim themselves to be for the Indian, but whose end is that he ceases to be one.” Other anthropologists, Ricardo Pozas and Isabel H. de Pozas, observed that the “true content” of *indigenismo* was “expediting the exploitation of those human conglomerates most easily exploitable” (Cockcroft, 1998, p. 146).

Views of *Mestizaje* and Oppositional Ideology

Mestizaje ala mexicanada (Mexican style) occurred after the Conquest of the 15th Century when Mesoamerica was savagely destroyed. *Mestizaje* took form during the 300 years of colonization before the birth of Mexico. Jose Vasconcelos’ *La Raza Cósmica*, was interpreted in what “seemed emphatically to regard the mixing of the races, or *mestizaje*, especially as it is given in Latin America, as the fundamental requirement to the emergence of the new age” (1979, p. xii). Vasconcelos’ work elicited other interpretations that imply that *mestizaje* “has traditionally been taken as a racist theory for the encouragement of people with deeply rooted feelings of inferiority. Such interpretation eventually caused the dismissal of his work as just

another self-serving dream of the Latin American poetic mind,” (ibid., xii). Marxists summarily dismissed his work because of its lack of materialistic doctrine (ibid., xv).

Mexicano philosopher Samuel Ramos supported this notion of an inferiority complex with origins in the Spanish Conquest that had been reinforced by the Spanish colonization period as well as by the intervention of France and the United States. He argued that this inferiority complex had forced Mexicans to look to Europe for guidance and direction (Ramirez, 1998). Octavio Paz argued that the Mexican felt inferior because of Conquest and the vulnerability of having been deculturalized (1998).

There are scant historical feminist and/or critical perspectives that examine the long-term psychological, social and cultural sense of perceived powerlessness caused by colonization. Recently, Chicana feminists have begun to examine the Chicano Movement’s response to internal colonialism through new methodological lenses and to critique its failure to address the oppression of women and the deconstruction of patriarchy. Historian Cynthia Orozco supports this notion as she notes, “The Chicano movement was a nationalist struggle for the liberation of the Mexican people in the United States, though class struggle was a conscious component among various sectors. It must be clear that this movement did *not* attempt to end patriarchy, the system by which men dominate women” (1993, p. 11). In response to this neglect by the Movement, some Chicana feminists have turned to *mestizaje* in an attempt to forge their own identities and to begin the healing process.

Gloria Anzaldúa pronounced *mestizaje* as her identity as she refers to building “*una cultura mestiza*—with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture” (1999, p. 44). However, the concept eventually became part of the lexicon in Mexican and later on in Chicana/o writing. Emma Perez argues that Gloria Anzaldúa opposed historian Rodolfo Acuña’s work by developing a “new postnationalist project in which *la nueva mestiza*, the mixed-race woman, is the privileged subject of an interstitial space that was formerly a nation, and is now without borders or boundaries.” Perez argues that for Anzaldúa, *mestizaje* has been “redefined and remixed with an open consciousness” (Perez, 1999, p. 25).

There are researchers who see the value of utilizing *mestizaje* as a tool for analysis. Vasquez (2006) argues that *mestizaje* should not be abandoned. Although fraught with “serious drawbacks,” he argues that it continues to be a “hegemonic bipolar racial formulation in the United States, which places Latinos in an inferior position in race hierarchies, challenging researchers to “understand its genealogy and its current cultural reality” (ibid., 152).

Elizondo supports *mestizaje* as an identity that “carries a powerful liberatory impulse, despite its tragic origin” (Vasquez, p. 139). *Mestizaje*, he tells us, “is feared by established groups because it is the deepest threat to all humanly made barriers of separation that consecrate oppression and exploitation. It is a threat to the security of ultimate belonging—that is, to the inherited cultural/national identity that clearly and ultimately defines who I am to myself and the world” (Elizondo, 1983: 43-44).

Comprehension of *mestizaje* requires a historical context of colonialism and its effect on nations and societies and of the dialectical forces that forced indigenous groups to seek out liberation. As Fanon (1993) states, “Decolonization is the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature, which in fact owe their originality to that sort of stratification which results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies”. At the base of colonization are self-hate and an unwillingness to accept the essence of one’s being.

Historically, *mestizaje* has been “illustrated by the hold of *La Malinche* [defined as a negative term wherein Malintzin, Cortez’ companion, is blamed for the conquest] on the Mexican national imagination” (Vasquez, 2006, p. 135). It was “the bastard of *La Malinche*---the absolute negation of the Amerindian civilizations by the Iberian Conquest-Colonialism, a negation materialized through indigenous and African slave labor” (De La Torre, Espinoza, 2006). A time had come to resurrect this concept with spiritualism and positive qualities. Scholars are challenged to view the more contemporary perspectives on *mestizaje* from both male and female perspectives, for example, a contemporary perspective offered by Gloria Anzaldúa, has been interpreted as a challenge to break down dualities that often psychologically imprison women (Anzaldúa 1999, p. 5).

In like manner, queer Chicana/os have begun to embrace *mestizaje* as a means of defining themselves and finding their place in a postcolonial society that continues to challenge their right to exist. When discussing the work of author Richard Rodriguez, critic Fredrick Luis Aldama makes reference to Rodriguez’ “creative autobiographical reinvention . . . he appears as a shape-shifter of sorts who inhabits the slipstreams of a third space that is neither black nor white but queer ‘Catholic Indian Spaniard’,” and, in so doing “points to new ways of seeing ethnic and sexual relationalities” (Aldama 2005, p. 21).

Understanding *mestizaje* from proper contemporary psychological contexts, with commensurate comprehension of its genesis and reiterative interpretations both positive and negative is a critical aspect of this review. Historical events should be critically examined

through the eyes of relevant and state-of-the art methodology. Chicanas/os have historically been examined through distorted lenses, couched in cultural deficiency models used to explain ailments lying deep in the bottom of their souls, developed by the Master's whim and used for hegemonic purposes. Often times, psychologists and psychiatrists trained in mainstream paradigms attempt to probe the minds, hearts and *almas* (souls) of *La Raza* with ineffective and culturally irrelevant tools; sometimes causing more psychic damage.

Perspectives developed from the dominant culture continue to blame the victim, filled with contradiction, supported by those who control the media with images, iconography, and pictures in history books with theories developed and formed into an ideology that paint a grotesque picture of an unsavory group, lacking intelligence and enough sophistication to control their own destinies. Until a culturally relevant oppositional theory emerges from the *barrios* (Chicana/o neighborhoods) and *colonias* (Mexican neighborhoods), a dialectical approach that utilizes *Raza cuentos* (stories) y *testimonios* (testimonies) to tell our truths, *La Raza's* stories will continue to be buried beneath the quagmire of racism.

Chela Sandoval (2000, p. 83) has been in the forefront of conceptualizing differential oppositional movement utilizing "oppositional technologies of power: both 'inner' or psychic technologies and 'outer' technologies of social praxis." Barthes (1968) refers to it as "mythology...or challenging the dominant ideological forms through their deconstruction." These authors would posit that inner psychic strategies include the development of culturally relevant healing forms constructed to deal with *nuestras realidades* (our realities), with a reinvention of alternative therapeutic techniques relevant to the culture and outer technologies of social praxis as resistance against oppressive social forces.

Another form of oppositional ideology is *curanderismo* (holistic healing). As a form of oppositional ideology, the challenge is for *curanderismo* to effectively respond and offer an enduring counter-hegemonic form of cultural identity? The greatest challenge is to recognize when subaltern cultures trapped into a counterproductive volley of exchanging terms with themselves, the dominant culture, and then themselves again in a kind of rotating grasp for a viable self and identity? *Curanderismo* can offer a *modus operandi*, a process for healing; whether or not the individual heals comes from the individual. The constant anxiety caused by suffering from a lost identity while simultaneously searching for self can be resolved. *Curanderismo* is the process, not the answer, and because it is not necessarily accepted by mainstream society, but antithetical to western psychiatry, it is oppositional.

Immigrants and Defining a Third Space

Defining *nepantla* for both newly arrived immigrants and acculturated Chicanas/os also means struggling with intra-group differences especially as porous borders have brought both groups together. The continued flow of immigration from Latin America countries continues; as Del Castillo states in a poem referring to Chicanos and Mexicanos as “flowers from the same garden,” and reconvene in a communal space from different sides of a political border. The differences have caused division, splintering between and among group members (2002, p. 31). Dialectically it reinforces the divide and conquer rule used so effectively in disenfranchised communities.

The colonization/decolonization dichotomy has come to life again in the 21st century as Latina/o settlers and sojourners cross manmade borders encountering other types of borders more difficult to decipher; borders that their ancestors crossed historically leaving a legacy of traumatic memories and wounds that need to be healed. As Miller states, “Fifth World *mestizaje* is resolutely ambivalent, because it signifies both aperture and mass access to the realities of cultural contact, cultural exchange, and resident difference but also registers the exploitation and institutional appropriation of these conditions across national boundaries. Hybrid culture is on the rise as Gómez-Peña (1993) states, “And border youth –the fearsome ‘cholo--punks,’ children of the chasm that is opening between the ‘First’ and the ‘Third’ worlds, become the indisputable heirs to a new *mestizaje*” (the fusion of the Amerindian and European races, p. 39).

Casting stones continues as Mexican Americans and Chicanas/os are referred to as *pochas/os* defined as, “an Anglicized Mexican American, overly Americanized in speech and culture” (Richardson, p. xv). Gloria Anzaldúa recalls that *Pocho* meant being a cultural traitor. As she stated, “I have been accused by various Latinos and Latinas. Chicano Spanish is considered by the purist and by most Latinos deficient, a mutilation of Spanish. But Chicano Spanish is a border tongue which developed naturally . . . Chicano Spanish sprang out of the Chicanos’ need to identify ourselves as a distinct people” (1999, p. 77).

Mexicanas/os are referred to as *mojadas/os* (a derogatory term defined as wetbacks) by those from the dominant culture and often by their brothers and sisters from the north. It is a negative term dating back historically to the 18th century. Without knowledge, comprehension and proper historiography, the two groups fall prey to the Master’s narrative and cast aspersions onto each other. Our brothers and sisters from the south are not aware of the historical trauma

superimposed upon Chicanas/os. They are kept blinded by the Master's narrative depicting members of *La Raza*, specifically Chicanas/os in American society as successful parts of the American Dream; however, Chicanas/os have been exploited by race, class, ethnicity, and gender through intense colonization processes. They have been characterized as social misfits by society through gross stereotypes. Slowly as the illusion of paved gold streets and the Puritan Ethic is unveiled, *Mexicanas/os* are exposed to the contradictions in American society, and begin to suffer from the same inequities similar to how Chicanas/os have suffered historically.

The lack of conscientização or “learning how to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality,” developed by Paolo Freire (1970, p. 35) has kept *La Raza* in bondage to a social stratification system relegating them to the lower echelons in American society. Both groups consciously and unconsciously suffer from this dilemma. It strains the relationships between the two groups and causes an assortment of conflicts that have yet to be resolved. Many youth inherit these intra-group prejudices, literally struggling in community to claim space. The collective wounded spirits roam in unknown space while conflicts persist.

Oppositional Consciousness *ala Mestizaje*

Freedom and decolonization are dialectics that derive from both external and internal forms of oppression. Freedom requires conscious action upon the world. As Chicana/os struggle to free themselves from internal colonization, continued pursuance toward alternative therapies are critical aspects of a healing process. Transformation, from both the material conditions or how our consciousness is constructed, and resistance against the psychological frame of references that destroy our wills, need to be reinforced. Material decolonization consists of continued resistance against the evil forces that oppress us; forces such as media, the value of materialism and communication that continue their attacks upon the culture. Psychological decolonization consists of freeing your own mind from the many negative images forced upon the psychology of the individual and group, the invasive stereotypes and internal and external border conflicts. These include artistic expression and strategies that emanate from the culture and can be used to resist further colonization.

Anzaldúa (1990) argues that we need theories that explain our realities, our existential existences and our transcendental experiences with conflicts. As she states, “*Necesitamos teorías*

[We need theories] that will rewrite history using race, class, gender, and ethnicity as categories of analysis, theories that cross borders, that blur boundaries –new kinds of theories with new theorizing methods” (1990). She challenges Chicanas/os to accept all sides of their identity through resistance. In an interpretation regarding Anzaldúa’s work, Sonia Saldivia Hull states, “Anzaldúa’s claim of the Indian part of her *mestizaje* avoids simplistic appropriation. The *indigena* in the New *Mestiza* is a new political stance as a fully racialized feminist Chicana. She appeals to a history of resistance by subaltern Indian women of the Americas and in that shared history narrates strong political affiliation: ‘My Chicana identity is grounded in the Indian woman’s history of resistance’” (Saldivia-Hull, p. 5). As Sandoval (2006) states regarding famed Franz Fanon’s work, “Fanon’s 1951 imposition of the image ‘black skin/white masks’ on a white colonizing culture provided one means by which to interfere with and move the colonial relations between the races; his aim was to deconstruct the kinds of citizen-subjects that colonialism produced.”

Conversely, for every act of oppression there is also an act of resistance as dialectically the forces of oppression and resistance encounter each other. Historically, oppressors develop tools designed to further control as colonizers attempt to gain hegemony over people and resources. As the erosion of identity has been introduced and forced assimilation is required, conquered populations rebel, revolt and resist at varying levels and often in unconscious ways. A group cannot depend upon the Master’s tools to liberate itself. It must develop an ideology emanating from the people, one that offers both inter and intra group healing. For too long, *La Raza* has been its worst enemy, often metaphorically written about in the crab theory wherein we become our own oppressors. The crab theory espouses that crabs in a bucket do not allow other crabs to rise to the top and get out. Metaphorically, *Raza* has been accused of practicing this.

Curanderismo and Decolonization Therapy

After the Mexican American War, *el mestizaje* encountered new form of oppressions with many of the outer trappings of colonialism. Chicana/o sociologists conceptualized it as the Internal Colonial Model. Chicanas/os discovered that the primordial loss was not the Spanish language; nor Hispanic identity, it was the loss suffered as generations of Chicanas/os lost their indigenous identities. Linguistic imperialism became a tool used by the power structure to destroy languages as acculturation and forced assimilation created a negative view of *mestizaje*, creating a myth that the Conqueror was superior, causing collective alienation in the group’s

consciousness. In Mesoamerican history it was the destruction of *Nahuatl*, replacing it with Spanish. In modern society, namely in the United States of America, it is the destruction of Spanish.

The colonization/decolonization dichotomy and the deconstruction of the latter are at the psychological base of true liberation. True liberation as stated by Brazilian education liberationist Freire translates into freeing the oppressed and the oppressor. In this case, liberation of the oppressor/oppressed dichotomy savagely mauling at our consciousness means acceptance of the self, in its human form. As Freire stated, “The great humanistic and historic task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both” (Freire, 1970). Freeing the oppressor can begin its initial journey as the group strives to unshackle itself from the chains of colonial domination. If “authentic liberation [is] the process of humanization (ibid., 79), then the re-humanization of marginalized cultures and peoples must be created through resistance. Decolonization therapy is acting upon our world from our perspectives. It serves the purpose of coming to terms with the oppressor/oppressed dichotomy that is manifested in *mestizaje*, an amelioration process for true acceptance, a forgiving of the undue burdens that *La Raza* keeps buried deep its unconscious collective memory.

In her essay, “Art in América con Acento,” Cherríe Moraga explores this notion, “. . . I refuse to be forced to identify. I am the product of an invasion. My father is Anglo; my mother, Mexican. I am the result of the dissolution of bloodlines and the theft of language” (p. 213). Marginal existence ensued, caused by psychological, emotional and economic turmoil; the loss of the soul leading to *espanto* (intense fright or horror) and *susto* (a spiritual sickness brought on by a frightening or traumatic experience). In the United States of America, *mestizas/os* encountered the philosophy of Manifest Destiny a philosophical treatise used as a rationalization to colonize the Chicana/o a second time. Moraga responds to this challenge by emphasizing the importance of Chicano literature as a means of resistance and of healing. She denounces the concept of Hispanic and calls herself a half-breed writer, a Chicana who refuses to be assimilated into the myth of the melting pot. In her view “art is political,” (p. 215).

A new spiritual reawakening of *mestizaje* emerged in the 1960s. The beginnings of a philosophy of *Chicanismo* was initiated but never finished as another painful journey to nurture

the collective *Alma de la Raza* (the heart of the people) began. *Mestizaje* was grounded and redefined as exemplified in Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales’ poem, “I am Joaquin,” wherein he writes, “The Indian has endured and still emerged the winner, The *Mestizo* must yet overcome” (2001, p. 23).

In the 1960s and 1970s, Chicana/o communities were struggling for social justice. There were no pills that soothed broken spirits caused by broken treaties. *Coraje* (anger) and *rabia* (rage) had invaded the communities’ collective soul. Indigenous ceremonies were not always available to heal the many wounded spirits. Acting out against internal demons further exacerbated stress and tension in relationships, many times causing more harm than good. Activism became a *remedio* to counteract oppression, essentially a decolonization process. Overcoming colonization with the resultant manifestations of perceived inferiority, perceived powerlessness, and self-hate became a momentous task, especially as dominant institutions in American society reinforced these notions. The reality was that Chicanas/os did not have to deny their indigenous selves in futile attempts to serve the Master’s ideology. We simply had to acknowledge that many Chicanas/os are also *mestizas/as* and that *mestizaje* can be a positive force.

Once empowered with indigenous histories, Chicanas/os began to identify with our Native roots; however, it was at the expense of the oppressor/oppressed dichotomy. In other words, many began to deny those Spanish roots that were a part of our history. History had taught them that Spaniards were responsible for the brutal rape of indigenous women, emasculation of the men, resulting in denigrating forms of *machismo*. Those scars have yet to be healed. What resulted was denial from another perspective. Instead of denying the indigenous parts of ourselves, many Chicanas/os began to deny the Spanish side. Acceptance of our true selves meant coming to terms with all of those historical experiences that shape us who we are, the multicultural and multiracial mixtures that are part of our histories. Granted, the oppressor/oppressed dichotomy from a racial perspective still existed; but we had traveled there, across those once misunderstood borders and had triumphed.

Raza no longer has to view itself as inferior. *Mestizaje* has to be redefined, a definition that assists *La Raza* in fulfilling its destiny. For too long, Chicanas/os have been victims of scientific methodology and purported objective analyses used for constructing knowledge. The time to construct our own knowledge that will free us has arrived. Cultural activists emerged during the 1960s revolution in American society in search of true liberation. Culturally

competent concepts such as *Razalogia* were developed. Defined as “a community learning for creating knowledge, nurturing personal and group power and advancing human/social transformation by sharing life experiences of family, culture and community; it represented the base of knowledge of the *Raza* experience; knowledge of India/o-Latina/o people derived from their realities and struggles for social justice and human actualization” (Vargas, Martinez, 1984, p. vii). It emanated from the works of Paolo Freire’s, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. *Razalogia* includes healing from past wounds. In the final analysis, the development of a methodology of the oppressed is fundamental to liberation.

The Chicana/o *Movimiento*, with all of its shortcomings, can be a prime example of collective resistance, a form of decolonization therapy. The Chicana/o Movement provided *Raza* with methods of healing wounded spirits, an attempt to revolutionize their existence. Resistance became paramount as artists, musicians, healers, poets, and *danzantes* crawled out of the woodworks to announce a brand new day. Their art forms expressed resistance and struggle in search of identity. The creation of the arts was an external renaissance that was taking place. It was soothing to know that the days of maltreatment and disrespect would no longer be tolerated. Images hidden in *mestiza/o* souls were appearing throughout the *barrios* and *colonia* (colonies). It was transcendental art, the beginning of a journey to find ourselves. In like manner, Chicano literary production frequently served as a form of activism and decolonization therapy. The creation of resistance emanated from the *las almas de la Raza* (souls of the people). *Curanderismo* although minimally triumphant, opened the doors for further advancement. It had withstood the pressures of assimilation and existed in the many *barrios* and *colonias* in the Southwest.

As one of the authors, a cultural activist and healer has shared, the Chicana/o Movement produced activists in a variety of disciplines whose stories are untold. Many graduate students, walking out of universities with master’s degrees in psychology, health and human services, counseling and social work, knew that *La Raza* had been subjected to culturally deficient and invasive philosophies from a mainstream traditional WASP model, blaming the victim for his or her own calamities. Overcoming this hegemony took many resistive forms, many times from the clients who did not respond to intervention. During the Chicana/o *Movimiento*, there were also many activists that gravitated into disciplines and employment fraught with the Master’s tools. There were healers who were quiet leaders struggling every day to make systems healthier and

more culturally responsive to our communities' health needs. They are stories about balancing out life's struggles, contributing to humanity and finding peace within.

Healing ceremonies and sweats were used as culturally responsive forms of seeking out solace and comfort. Visits with *antepasados* (ancestors) were encouraged by *curanderas/os* with *remedios* that were culturally specific. The amelioration of shame was being addressed as *Raza* took control of their destinies. The liberation ideology referred to as Chicanismo was never completed. It was diluted and lost as the Movement was destroyed by external and internal forces. But it can be revived.

As immigration increased in numbers so has the intra-group conflict. The influx of indigenous immigrants including droves of *Mexicanas/os* into American society seeking out a better life will continue with or without comprehensive immigration policy. But it has also bred apartheid *ala americana* and increased xenophobia and racism. Immigrants enter American society without an understanding of the historical struggles experienced by Chicanas/os in this society encountering an assortment of divisive issues generally perpetuated by the power structure in its attempts to create a permanent working underclass as the brown horde continues its journey. We are at the crossroads with many challenges but the collective will has survived many historical atrocities and will persist.

The ideology of *mestizaje* can be revived and taken to its next level if the collective will to heal persists. A revival via the eyes of critical consciousness can be successful as long as Chicanas/os develop their own tools for healing, a healing that will cleanse the *vergüenza* and indignation that we have so masterfully carried as we have worn European masks throughout history. We propose that healing through psychological acceptance of one's identity may be one of the pathways to ameliorating this conflict. Finding this third space has been a historical labyrinth; fraught with struggle; but struggle is a healing force.

Curanderismo* crosses the spiritual border into *Nepantla

Curanderismo, with a genesis and long history of utilization in Mesoamerican cultures and underground utilization in modern society with a growing interest in community, has entered the third space. Defined as Indigenous/Mexican American holistic healing and practiced in local *barrios*, *curanderas/os* treat the spirit in conflict, an entity viewed as mystical, something that is foreign to western psychiatry. *Raza* remains in conflict over what nature provides us and what science purports to be truth (*Curandera* Diana Velazquez, Video, 1985).

The balancing act has not been discovered as western psychiatry has final say so in institutional practice. *Curanderismo* origins can be traced back in time to indigenous communities as healing and medicine were developed in response to addressing culturally specific maladies. There is an extensive amount of research in this area reflecting its utility and effectiveness. Although, for the most part it remains hidden in Chicana/o neighborhoods, criticized by psychiatric imperialism, *curanderas/os* have practiced *curanderismo* as communities developed alternative therapeutic responses to institutional forms of colonialism. Healers have utilized holistic healing for centuries and in contemporary society as a therapeutic alternative to a psychiatric system that has become anachronistic as western healing therapies attempt to ameliorate Chicanas/os wounded spirits.

Community *curanderas/os* continue to exercise opposition to dominant institutional forms of psychiatry. When dialogue leans toward the supernatural and mysticism; science trumps. Western psychiatry has a potpourri of labels for these phenomena. The role of *curanderismo* is the opposite; it is intended to unite the practitioner with her or his idealized aspirational self such that the individual can then discern experience as consistent with this idealized self or not; thus, enhancing the further ability to establish boundaries to demarcate one's self from potentially damaging experiences; going back to roots, *las raíces* that have been destroyed because of colonization. For Proust, it was a "matter of chance whether an individual forms an image of himself, whether he can take hold of his experience" as Benjamin explains (1968, p. 158). The practice of *curanderismo* is seeking to lessen this contingency and provide a clearer route toward realizing one's idealized experience in material reality. *Curanderismo* is the bridge between the mystic, psychic world of aspirational idealism and freedom to the world of experienced reality and challenges. Bridging this gap, however, can help to realize a freer world for all those willing to experience this riskier, slightly radical diverse world of souls thus potentially affecting the previously ethnically marginalized peoples of this country.

Curanderismo is *nepantla* in action, a spiritual border-crossing example of the clash of dominant and perceived subservient cultures in dialectical struggle. For Santayana, and for Indigenous/Mexican American folk/holistic healing practices, the union of the idealized spirit, whether historical, cultural, oppressed or damaged, with the colonized body begins a step toward the materialist realization of a psychologically and spiritually healthier self. The construction of a healthy self may be dependent on the sort of 'shock' or provocation that *curanderismo* provides. This is the shock that Santayana reminds us is crucial to the development of a viable, secure self,

“[e]xperience, when the shocks that punctuate it are reacted upon instinctively, imposes belief in something far more recondite than mental discourse, namely a person or self” (1936, p. 410).

Curanderismo then, is the practice of tapping into the nether world of psychic energies that may be disavowed owing to a lack of tolerance of the dominant society. The practice of *curanderismo* is thus slightly radical in its process of deriving a perhaps forgotten or repressed energetic force, which may be incompatible with given orthodox practices and standards; it’s a way of exercising and expanding freedom. The vying for an ideal self, garnering and garnered by new freedoms, help to construct a new material self. *Curanderismo* then, is the practice of tapping into the nether world of psychic energies that may be disavowed owing to a lack of tolerance of the dominant society. The practice of *curanderismo* is thus slightly radical in its process of deriving a perhaps forgotten or repressed energetic force, which may be incompatible with given orthodox practices and standards; it’s a way of exercising and expanding freedom. The vying for an ideal self, garnering and garnered by new freedoms, help to construct a new material self.

Authors argue that *curanderismo* is an example of a powerful, effective, psychic and oppositional method utilized by community in response to ineffective mainstream healing and psychiatric methods practiced in western society. *Curanderismo*, this paper argues, provides one such avenue in seeking the love of self while also helping to ‘provoke’ the love of others in a community of worldly love. The practice of *curanderismo* seeks to unite being with action in a faithful human pursuit of moral excellence connected to the divine. For example, in the process of *curanderismo*, the spirit becomes the teacher, “[n]ot any profane man, not any sensual, not any liar, not any slave can teach, but only he can give, who has; he only can create, who is” (Emerson 2000, p. 70). The spiritual aspect of *curanderismo* is foreign to dominant forms of psychiatry. When a union of becoming and being makes its presence known, coercive power recedes since human beings are divinely inspired toward action. Humans then do not require an externally imposed law, there is a divine command present and active rooted in the faith of human relations governed by reciprocal love, “[t]he test of true faith ... should be its power to charm and command the soul ... so commanding that we find pleasure and honor in obeying” (Emerson 2000, p. 71).

Not surprisingly, indigenous healing has evolved into a theme in popular literature; as Kaufmann explains, “As the boundaries between genres have become continually blurred, the demarcation between scholarly writing and fiction has become fragmented . . . Fiction, she [Harrison (1995)] notes, has served as a means of critical exploration into cultural,

psychological, and historical dilemmas” (2001). Unfortunately and somewhat predictably, however, despite its gradual introduction to the dominant culture, fictional *curanderismo* has encountered the same resistance as the actual indigenous healing model. According to the American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom, *Bless Me, Ultima*, the classic story of a young boy’s relationship with a *curandera*, was the fifth most challenged book in public libraries during 2008. The reasons for the challenges included such diverse objections as: “occult/satanism, offensive language, religious viewpoint, sexually explicit, violence” (2009). *Bless Me, Ultima* has been placed on the proverbial chopping block, with similar characterizations. However, it remains a classic piece of literature in Chicana/o Studies. This is oppositional consciousness.

Caution needs to be exercised as this process continues to unfold; however, the dominant culture has attempted and will continue to make inroads toward co-opting or reestablishing the newly less dominated relationship with new methods of control or domination. This phenomenon can be indicated as both the dominated and the dominator contest to re-inflect a term to suit their current ideological aspiration. In other words, both sides find themselves in a liminal state but now in competition to assert their particular version of the ideology, in their favor. This is counterproductive and a logical outcome when powerful ideologies enter into a prolonged and contested struggle. In the author’s view, this is representative of the current historical moment in the Chicana/o community. Furthermore, this countering representative ideological struggle is a trap for both sides, as you make clear in your Freirean development of conscientização.

Curanderismo is used to enter into spiritual space, a force that can be used in bridging identities, torn apart by historical circumstance, at times, leaving *Raza* without roots. In Denver, Colorado, for the past several years, healers from Mexico have made treacherous journeys into the United States to share culturally relevant and historical practices that are extremely effective, addressing nursing and medical schools as well as local nonprofit organizations that are beginning to develop entrance structures for this form of holistic healing to be integrated into mainstream psychiatric and medical organizations.

Del Castillo (1999) offers insight into strategic approaches during a quasi-institutionalization process utilized at Southwest Denver Community Mental Health Center wherein *curanderismo* through the practice of Diana Velazquez, a renowned *curandera*, withstood the pressures of western psychiatry, defining a space for over 25 years. Currently, *Clinica Tepeyac*, a nonprofit health organization that serves Latinas/os is collaborating with the

Chicana/o Studies Department at Metropolitan State College of Denver. *Curanderismo* then, resists cooptation, and thus repressive tolerance, because of its ability to tap into the ongoing, unfolding human experience of seeking idealized freedoms in a material world.

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