

8 Latin American and Latinx Feminisms

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Introduction

Latin American and Latinx feminisms emerge out of the social and political backdrop of Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States. Hence, the scope of the field is wide and includes diverse positions. The diversity of ideas represented by Latin American and Latinx feminisms is owed to its wide geographical landscape framed by many diasporic conditions that have generated points of contact and convergence. Nevertheless, the tradition broadly coheres around its desire to contextualize ideas in a way that appreciates the intimate bond between theory and lived experience.

This chapter has two central aims, one expository and the other argumentative. First, the expository goal is to introduce the tradition of Latin American and Latinx feminisms, and in so doing provide historical context to the ideas and figures therein. It is important to note that what can be presented in a single chapter is not exhaustive. Yet, the task remains urgent and important. The voices of women and gender non-conforming people within Latin American philosophy, specifically in the context of the U.S., are often under-represented or are omitted from the history of Latin American philosophy. For instance, it is not unusual to see the work of women and gender-non-conforming peoples in the history of Latin American philosophy as a mere topic within Latin American philosophy rather than constituting an independent rich and complex tradition of its own. It is for this reason that Cynthia Paccacerqua has noted that Latin American and Latinx feminisms are specters of the Latin American philosophical tradition.¹ In light of the historiographical omissions within Latin American and Latinx philosophies, tracing the ideas of Latin American and Latinx feminisms proves to be difficult, since the ideas are not necessarily identifiable through their historical impact. In other words, their ideas did not necessarily have social and political impact. However, historiographical absence does not entail lack of existence. Hence, the argumentative goal of this chapter is to give credence to the claim that Latin American and Latinx feminist ideas exist and are worthy of close attention in spite of their historical and philosophical absence. If strong, this argument contests any

philosophical histories that do not acknowledge Latin American and Latinx feminist ideas.

To this point, Latin American feminist scholar Francesca Gargallo has argued that Latin American feminist ideas are older than their impact in history.² According to Gargallo, many of the feminist ideas that are now central to the Latin American feminist tradition did not have an immediate historical impact *because they belonged to women*. Hence, the impact of ideas can only be appreciated retrospectively, considering the emergence of feminist ideas independent of their contemporary social and epistemic impact. By providing a brief exposition of the vast theoretical landscape of Latin American and U.S. Latinx feminisms, I aim to make the specter of Latin American philosophy visible, heard, and felt. Rather than asking: “Were there Latin American or Latinx feminist scholars?” we ought to be asking: “What were Latin American and Latinx feminist scholars thinking, writing, saying?”

This chapter opens by describing the origins of feminist ideas in pre-20th century Latin America. I consider the importance of women’s ideas as part of the resistance to colonialism and its aftermath by introducing the figures of Anacaona and Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz. Then, in the context of the early 20th century, I discuss the ideas of Luisa Capetillo. Capetillo embodies the claim that Latin American feminist ideas emerge in the nexus between theory and praxis, converging with complex social and political commitments. She also serves as a bridge to the U.S. because of her location, Puerto Rico, drawing attention to the ways the U.S. empire was built upon violent interventions in the Caribbean, creating the conditions for diaspora that frame Latinx feminisms. In the second part of the chapter I orient the reader toward Latinx feminisms through discussions of Ch/Xicana writers, specifically Gloria Anzaldúa, who serves as a bridge to contemporary Latinx feminism. Anzaldúa has been widely influential across disciplines, but for the purposes of this chapter I trace her influence on contemporary Latinx feminist philosophy. I also discuss the ideas of Mariana Ortega, whose account of selfhood is deeply influenced by Anzaldúa. The chapter closes by pivoting briefly back to Latin America to consider contemporary topics on translation and translocation.

Foundations of Latin American and Latinx Feminisms

Contemporary intellectual histories of Latin American and Latinx feminism tend to emphasize the social and political moments of the 1960s and 1970s, which frame women’s social movements in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the U.S. Yet, the ideas that ground the social and political claims of women’s social movements are much older. The foundations of Latin American and Latinx feminist claims are found in feminist reflections on gender and difference in a world reconfigured by the colonial project.³ Colonialism required the invention of race, gender, and the regulation of

sexuality to produce capitalistic modernity.⁴ Colonial violence includes the violent dislodging of Native American populations and the introduction of a global schema that constructed the concept of humanity through gendered whiteness framed by religious doctrine (see chapters 2 and 9). Hence, the ideas that emerge in this context are often born out of strategies of resistance and struggle to the colonialism and its aftermaths.

In this context, the ideas of non-white women before the 19th century are seldom considered. Marked by their perceived status as non-human, many were illiterate, and their existence has not been documented in traditional textual form.⁵ Nevertheless, they spread ideas about resistance that were transferred orally and which have a legacy that exists today. One example can be found in Anacaona, Taino chief (*cacica*) of Jaragua Hispanola. She was executed during the Spanish occupation of Hispanola in 1503. Prior to her execution she was offered clemency in exchange for her role as a concubine. She refused and was publicly hanged, thus enacting a politics of colonial resistance that continues to be immortalized in the oral histories of Haiti, Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico. Her ideas about resistance are not represented in a history that privileges the written word, but her historical prominence is felt in songs and national origin stories. For example, Haiti often cites her as a symbolic Indigenous mother of the nation. She is also found in the rhythms of salsa, where the song “Anacaona” by Cheo Feliciano orally conveys her story of embodied resistance. If we were simply to privilege a version of history that is oriented around written word, Anacaona would cease to exist. Hence, her narrative exemplifies the claim that to trace Latin American and Latinx feminism, we must broaden the meaning of the history of philosophy.

One of the oldest documented feminist writers of Latin America is Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651–1695). She was born in San Miguel Nepantla (now referred to as Nepantla de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz). In 1669 she entered the Order of the Jerónimas, and was able to dedicate herself to studying and writing. She remained part of the convent until her death. Scholars have wondered why Sor Juana entered the convent, but for an intellectually inquisitive woman living in the 17th century there were not many options that supported the flourishing of an intellectual life. The convent afforded her the space, albeit in solitude, to fortify intellectual pursuits. Sor Juana wrote poetry, drama, and philosophy. Her writing closely examined the intellectual life of women. However, as interest in the Baroque style of writing diminished so did attention to her oeuvre. It was not until 1951 that her complete works were published.⁶ Amidst the development of feminist social movements in Mexico, she was recovered as a foundational feminist figure whose work warranted not just literary, but philosophical attention.⁷

Sor Juana explored intellectual histories and demanded recognition of women’s writing.⁸ In so doing, she challenged intellectual histories that have silenced women. This point is most notably reflected in her essay “Response

to Sister Filotea,” one of her most famous pieces of writing, in which she responds to Sister Filotea de la Cruz about her right not to be silenced. Under the pseudonym of Sister Filotea, the bishop of Puebla had admonished Sor Juana for her vocalizing her ideas. Sor Juana responds by arguing that the silencing of women in the church denies the reality that there have always been wise women and defends the intellectual rights of women by citing extensive historical precedent.

To begin, Sor Juana argues that to be silenced in the 17th century for being a woman directly contradicts a long history of the contributions of wise women. She writes:

A Julia, a Corinna, a Cornelia; and in sum, the vast throng of women merited titles and earned renown: now as Greeks, again as Muses, and yet again as Pythonesses. For what were they all but learned women, who were considered, celebrated, and indeed venerated as such in Antiquity?⁹

Sor Juana establishes that women *can* make meaningful contributions to the teachings of the Catholic Church by demonstrating that there have been women with intellectual pursuits who were vocal and socially visible.¹⁰ The response is significant not just because of its central claim, but because of the argumentative strategy Sor Juana uses to advance her defense of the intellectual rights of women. She constructs a genealogy of female intellectuals and in doing so gives new meaning to history.¹¹ Consider the following lines:

I had no need of exemplars, nevertheless the many books that I have read have not failed to help me, both in sacred as well as secular letters. For there I see a Deborah issuing laws, military as well as political, and governing the people among whom there were so many learned men. I see the exceedingly knowledgeable Queen of Sheba, so learned she dares to test the wisdom of the wisest of all wise men with riddles, without being rebuked for it; indeed, on this account she is to become judge of the unbeliever. I see so many and significant women: some adorned with the gift of prophecy, like an Abigail; others, of persuasion, like Esther; others, of piety, like Rahab; others, of perseverance, like Anna [Hannah] the mother of Samuel; and others infinitely more, with other kinds of qualities and virtues.¹²

In this passage Sor Juana argues that there is no historical precedent for the silencing of women by reminding her audience of the social impact of women’s voices. In this passage she supports her argument by constructing a historiography that names the many women who have charted an intellectual path for her own studies and ideas. Thus, she demonstrates the falsity of the claim that women should be silent by drawing attention to the historical existence of wise women and their social impact. As a result, she

reconfigures the grounds on which intellectual histories have been drawn. She demands that an accurate historical account necessarily ought to include women's voices.

Sor Juana's methodology in the essay also merits attention. In order to vindicate the intellectual rights of women she insists on the importance of women in education. Put simply, women should be educated in order to further advance the intellectual lives of other women. To this effect she writes:

Oh, how many abuses would be avoided in our land if the older women were as well instructed as Leta and knew how to teach as is commanded by St. Paul and my father St. Jerome! Instead, for lack of such learning and through the extreme feebleness in which they are determined to maintain our poor women, if any parents then wish to give their daughters more extensible Christian instruction than is usual, necessity and the lack of learned older women oblige them to employ men as instructors to teach reading and writing, numbers, and music, and other skills. This leads to considerable harm, which occurs every day in doleful instances of these unsuitable associations.

This passage demonstrates that Sor Juana saw the harms generated by the exclusion of women from intellectual histories, which are two-fold. On the one hand, the absence of women from intellectual history produces a false perception that women have not led intellectual lives. On the other hand, the absence of women from intellectual histories also reproduces the lack of women in educational roles who can mentor, teach, and support other women in their intellectual pursuits. In order to resist these harms, Sor Juana produces a genealogy of intellectual women that serves to justify their role in education as well as their contributions to philosophical histories more broadly.

Sor Juana remains one of the most cited Latin American feminist figures. However, it is important to appreciate that she sits among other women who have advocated for social change and made possible the richness of Latin American feminist thought.¹³ The theoretical foundations of Latin American feminisms are found in the ideas and practices of women well before contemporary feminist movements. Their resistance to colonialism, insights into conditions of alterity, and their advocacy for intellectual rights form part of a rich groundwork that undergirds contemporary feminist thought in Latin America and the Caribbean and continues to flow into the United States. Thus, these intellectual ancestors remind us that the lack of historical visibility does not imply lack of philosophical influence. Furthermore, they demonstrate the important relationship between theory and practice given that their ideas were very much engendered through their practices of resistances.

Latin American Feminist Ideas of the 20th Century

In the 19th and early 20th century, Latin America and the Caribbean is marked by major social and political changes that frame the development of ideas throughout the region. The Latin American wars of independence stretched from 1808 to 1926 in the wake of the Haitian Revolution (1794–1804). With the exception of Cuba and Puerto Rico, Latin America and the Caribbean saw a major shift in power as a result of national wars of independence. However, the story of Latin America and the Caribbean at this juncture cannot be understood outside the context of U.S. interventionism, which undergirds the production of empire initiated by the seizure of Native lands and the project of slavery (see chapter 2). On the heels of independence movements in Latin America, the U.S. issued the Monroe Doctrine (1823) in an effort to establish its influence in the region. The Monroe Doctrine stated that the U.S. would oppose any intervention of European powers in North or South America. In doing so, however, the U.S. ensured that its power and influence in the region would remain undisturbed. In 1848, for instance, Mexico signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which ended the Mexican-American war (1846–1848), created the U.S.-Mexico boundary of the Rio Grande, and relinquished ownership of present day California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, and part of Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. In 1898, the Spanish-Cuban-U.S.-Philippine War materialized U.S. imperialism through the annexation of Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Guam, and Hawaii. In the years that follow, the U.S. occupied major production centers of tropical goods in the Caribbean and Central America in order to maintain its dominance in the region. Hence, the role of the U.S. in Latin American and Caribbean politics exemplifies the shift of power dynamics from models of colonialism to imperialism, which continues to characterize U.S. involvement in the region to this day.

In the context of shifting political horizons, feminist ideas in the 20th century emerge as part of interventions for broader social transformation impacted by the political shifts just described. Although not understood as feminist in their times, many of the ideas that stem from this historical moment thematically converge with broader claims about labor equality, access to education, and the right to vote. It is important to note here that the acquisition of the right to vote is often signaled as the apex of feminist movements. However, there is a much richer and deeper story in the context of Latin America and the Caribbean given the political complexities that frame the early 20th century. The multiplicitous historical conditions across the region serve as thematic catalysts for the writings of the time.

For example, Luisa Capetillo (1879–1922) born in Arecibo, Puerto Rico was an anarcho-syndicalist writer and activist who worked to cultivate workers' consciousness through the dissemination of her ideas. She took gender and sexual equality to be central features of class emancipatory struggle. Capetillo worked as a “reader” for much of her life, someone who

would read aloud to tobacco workers in cigar factories. A reader's pay would come directly from workers' wages, affording them the flexibility to read what workers wanted. As a result, readers served as a platform to build class consciousness, often reflecting on working conditions, extensive work days, and little pay. They read local newspapers, philosophical texts, plays, and their own writings. Capetillo became a reader at a time of radical labor politics in Puerto Rico, which placed her at the nexus of a transnational social movement given that anarchism was transnational as it stretched throughout the Caribbean, Central America, Spain, and some cities in the United States. Most of the agricultural labor force was illiterate. However, the role of readers in tobacco factories ensured that tobacco workers were some of the most radically conscious social groups. In this context, Capetillo's writing was to be heard at a time when the U.S. was occupying Puerto Rico and strengthening its status as an imperial power.

Capetillo authored four books over the course of her lifetime: *Ensayos libertarios* or *Libertary Essays* (1907), *La humanidad en el future* or *Humanity in the Future* (1910), *Mi opinión* or *My Opinion* (1911), and *Influencias de las ideas modernas* or *Influence of Modern Ideas* (1916). Her ideas evolved into a radical sexual politics undergirded by anarchist principles, most of which can be found in *Mi opinión* (1911). In this book she maintained that gender and class were co-constitutive and structurally oppressive. As a result, the struggle for liberty and emancipation required the participation of all people, not just women. This point is clearly seen in the following lines:

We need to expound some new system or doctrine, in order to get out of this labyrinth, in which we lose all noble sentiments and the most altruistic of aspirations. We have the duty to form groups or associations with the expressed purpose of emancipation. To accept things as they are, without proposing new forms of freedom is cowardice.¹⁴

She continues: "Those capitalists who think that they are exempt from these concerns because they have the means for an easier life. This concerns them too. Listen up! You have children, and these become infected with the diseases caused by poverty" (NW, 70).

It is clear then that Capetillo's emancipatory project was one that involved the whole of society. Nevertheless, her concerns were always grounded in the conditions of the working poor of Puerto Rico, whose livelihoods she understood as part of a continuation of slavery. To this effect she writes:

Peasants! From generation to generation you have seen things pass by without greater abundance in your homes. Your slavery has not disappeared; before your master maintained you, depriving you of your will. Now he has left your will free, but he deprives you of the means of

using that will. It is the same type of slavery with different methods. They oppress you, they humiliate you, tie you down to the land, to the machine, to the humiliating work that annihilates and brutalizes you, thereby stripping you of your status of free men, putting obstacles in the way of universal redemption. And still, you do not worry about anything except politics, which will offer you nothing, nor defend your rights, they use your ignorance to tie you down and wear you down always against your will. (NW, 114)

Capetillo's sexual politics were most explicitly reflected in her ideas about the institution of marriage, which she understood as the prostitution of love. Given that marriage is a contract regulated by the church and state, it is built upon conditions of inherent inequality from the position of women. As such, Capetillo advocated for its abolishment. Furthermore, she argued that love could not be regulated by law and required conditions of freedom to be truly honored. Freedom in love required the lack of duties, rights, and obligations toward partners. As a result, both people always retained the right to exit unworkable relationships without harm (NW, 34). For working, poor Puerto Rican women in the late 19th and early 20th century, this entailed access to an education that would not recreate conditions of dependency. As an anarchist, Capetillo was vehemently opposed to the existence of the state as the means of regulating wealth and power. The state created the conditions under which working people were exploited. This point is most clearly seen when she asks: "Why reproach women a natural life? Why make love an exclusive need of men?" (NW, 32) Making love free through the abolition of marriage was part of a larger emancipatory framework where freedom in love is identified with justice. Speaking to this particular relationship between love, freedom, and justice she states: "Freedom in love for women the same as for men is nothing other than a great act of justice" (NW, 34).

Capetillo's emancipatory project coincides with the suffrage movement of Puerto Rico, which was largely dominated by elite women's voices. The suffrage movement maintained the importance of the right to vote for literate women. In this context, Capetillo rarely articulated claims with respect to the right to vote consistent with her position on the unviability of the state. However, there is record of her stating that if the project of suffrage is to get off the ground at all, it can only do so by including all women, not just those who can read.¹⁵ At this time forty percent of the tobacco work force and eighty percent of the agricultural work force was illiterate.¹⁶ Hence, her critique of literacy requirements speak to the broader class conditions around which her emancipatory politics was framed. Her claims speak more broadly to the way in which Capetillo embodied her own philosophical commitments. Her ideas were very much a way of life, a disposition informed by anarchist thought. However, in the case of Capetillo, embodying resistance took on a new form. She never married even though

she had three children and she resisted sartorial gendered norms by dressing in men's clothing. She was often referred to as the "woman in pants." Both choices serve as examples in which Capetillo charted her own ideas about liberty, freedom, and emancipation through her lived experiences, always grounded in larger social projects. The target for Capetillo was never solely women, but rather conditions that would yield more freedom and that transcended nation-building projects that required the production of normative citizen subjects. Capetillo demonstrates the complexities that frame the evolution of what we now call feminist ideas in a geopolitical landscape fraught with colonial histories and imperial legacies. Furthermore, she illuminates the ways in which historical conditions operate as catalysts for the development of thought. In the context of Puerto Rico, the conditions of Spanish colonialism and the U.S. military invasion frame Capetillo's anarchist project and make possible simultaneous claims with regard to anti-colonial and anti-imperial resistance.

A single chapter cannot adequately explain the breadth and depth of Latin American feminist ideas of the 20th century. They are multiple, at times contradictory, and emerge in different geopolitical contexts. It is important to note, however, that the resources we have today are indebted to the historiographical work of many people, particularly women, who expressed themselves in the context of great adversity and sought to recuperate and make accessible the ideas of women lost to the pages of history.¹⁷ Luisa Capetillo stands as an excellent example of this process in that her thought was rescued from the archives of history by feminist projects that sought to locate foundational figures of feminist thought.¹⁸

U.S. Ch/Xicana and Latina/x Feminisms¹⁹

Historically, what we call Latina/x feminisms today is rooted in the Ch/Xicana feminist struggles of the 1960s and 1970s, a vast terrain of ideas that emerged in the context of social and political movements that sought to improve the conditions of Mexican descended peoples in the United States (see chapter 4). Influenced by the Black Power movement and the politically charged climate of the times, the Chicano movement aimed to create more equal conditions for Mexican descended peoples while simultaneously articulating a separatist ethnic nationalist resistance.²⁰ The conditions of the paradox created multiple strands of resistance, which translated into various agendas, leaders, and organizations. Ch/Xicanas, paralleling other women of color movements, coalesced into a struggle to confront sexism and racism as interlocking oppressions. The critiques of sexism were oriented around resisting machismo, which created immediate gender constraints on everyday life. For instance, their writing resists the construction of an ideal womanhood that was shaped by cultural nationalism and which equated cultural survival with traditional gendered norms that understood Ch/Xicanas as the anchor of the family and home. As a result, Ch/Xicanas were

often given subordinate positions in the movement and are forgotten in the narratives of resistance. Their critiques of racism engaged contemporary debates with white women feminisms whose racism erased women of color more broadly from the feminist conversation, and they never took for granted the fact that racism permeates everyday life. The vast landscape that is Ch/Xicana feminist thought does not have unifying themes, but is a complex tradition that responds to various interlocutors: women of color, white women, Chicanos, academics, and white heteronormative society, to name a few. If one can speak of any defining feature of Ch/Xicana feminist thought, it is its appreciation of heterogeneity, where theory and practice cannot be separated, and its recognition that the multiple subject positions we occupy are always intermeshed, complex, and at times incommensurable.²¹ It is always a theory in the flesh.²² One of the most widely known figures from the Ch/Xicana feminist tradition is Gloria Anzaldúa (1942–2004). She has been one of the most influential figures in both Ch/Xicana feminisms and Latina/x feminisms. Furthermore, she continues to reflect the way in which histories, place, and space serve as a catalyst for the formation of ideas given that she is writing from a border town in the Rio Grande Valley (see chapters 4 and 11).

Anzaldúa was born in the Rio Grande Valley on the Texas/Mexican border. Her scholarly corpus rejects simplistic accounts of identity and explores myriad dimensions of identity that stem from being a border dweller, growing up in between multiple cultures. She writes across genres, including poetry, prose, children's stories, autobiographical narratives, and theoretical essays. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) has been her most influential work, but it sits amidst a broader body of writings. Co-edited with Cherrie Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981) was one of the most influential anthologies in the history of women of color feminisms in the United States. In 1990 she edited *Making Face, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras*, and she co-edited *The Bridge We Call Home* (2002) with AnaLouise Keating. The *Anzaldúa Reader* (2009), edited by AnaLouise Keating, compiles her poetry, prose, and fiction demonstrating her versatility as an author. In 2015, *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality* was published posthumously with the editorial support of AnaLouise Keating. Anzaldúa's work deeply influenced many fields in the humanities. She also stands as one of the most iconic figures of Ch/Xicana feminisms forging a path for Latina/x feminisms. Her work speaks to the lived experiences of many border dwellers and crossers in the U.S. as well as abroad.²³

Anzaldúa's work explores themes of embodiment, place/space, experience, knowledge, spirituality, language, and identity. *Borderlands* is written in the language of the borderlands, shifting between English and Spanish throughout the text. The borderlands she speaks of are multiple, as noted in the following lines from the preface of the first edition:

The actual physical borderland that I am dealing with in this book is the Texas-U.S. Southwest/Mexican border. The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact, the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle, and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy.²⁴

The borderlands are in-between spaces where contradictions emerge and where multiple identities can co-exist. It is a place of anger, trauma, and wounds, as well as a space of new possibilities. Anzaldúa describes the U.S.-Mexico border as an open wound that bleeds as the two cultures grate against each other, and in that process forms a different culture, a border culture, where the *atravesados* or the border traversers dwell. The *atravesados* are “the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half dead; in short those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the ‘normal’” (B, 25). Hence, Anzaldúa’s project speaks to those who are marginalized and exist at the crossroads of complex social dynamics. From a border space the book explores the myriad dimensions of identity that emerge in the spaces that are outside of the norm: the experiences of cultural tyranny, machismo, violence, and trauma that make possible new experiences of those whose existence has been deemed unthinkable.

The last chapter of the book, one of the most widely cited, “La conciencia de las mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness,” provides an account of what Anzaldúa terms “mestiza consciousness,” which emerges through the border clash. Building on the idea of *mestizaje* from the work of José Vasconcelos (see chapter 4), Anzaldúa develops an account of the mestiza that is made possible by the context in which she writes: the U.S./Mexico borderlands. Informed by Aztec thought (see chapter 1), mestiza consciousness engenders a radical appreciation for ambiguity where incompatible frames of reference are always present, and conceptual rigidity is not an option. Mestiza consciousness requires a strategic flexibility and a tolerance for the ambiguous in order to survive.

The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be a Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good, the bad, and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain the contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else. (B, 101)

The mestiza way, as she calls it, is the way of being in the world that is made possible by the in-between produced by the borderlands. By

elaborating a theory of the mestiza Anzaldúa also explores themes of “linguistic terrorism,” spirituality, identity, sexuality, self-knowledge, violence, and imperialism. These topics are explored in relationship to one another, often weaved together to reveal the ways in which they interact. Consider the fifth chapter of the book titled “How to Tame a Wild Tongue,” which explores the relationship between language and identity. Anzaldúa writes:

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? 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 ni inglés*, but both. We speak a patois, a forked tongue, a variation of two languages. (*B*, 77)

Here Anzaldúa demonstrates that language is linked with identity. Language is the mechanism by which we communicate who we are and how we exist: “Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language” (*B*, 81). Yet, insofar as this is the case, language also succumbs to social forces that marginalize and oppress people. Hence, she uses the term “linguistic terrorism” to track the experience of speaking and being outside of the U.S. norm and aims to reveal the relationship between language, identity, and power.

The themes explored through the corpus of her work have served as points of entry for many Latina/x feminist projects in philosophy and throughout the humanities.²⁵ However, many have resisted treating Anzaldúa as a philosopher since her ideas are not easily categorizable within dominant philosophical frameworks.²⁶ Nevertheless, Anzaldúa’s impact cannot be measured, only witnessed in the myriad ways in which her ideas permeate across many fields. She helped to transform the fields of American studies, Chicano/a studies, literary studies, and women and gender studies, and continues to be honored in a variety of ways.²⁷ Furthermore, U.S.-based Latina/x feminisms are deeply indebted to the work of Anzaldúa.²⁸

One contemporary example is the scholarship of Mariana Ortega. Her most recent book, *In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self* (2016), draws on Anzaldúa’s work to develop an account of the multiplicitous self, one that experiences both multiplicity and oneness by virtue of the multiple social identities it occupies.²⁹ Ortega’s work is indebted to Latina/x feminist thought more broadly and bridges diverse lines of thought toward a project that seeks to give a more full and complex account of selfhood. Ortega does so by using Latina/x feminist thought as her theoretical grounding.

In the introduction of *In-Between*, Ortega spells out the defining features of Latina feminist phenomenology: (1) attention to the lived experience of Latinx

peoples in the U.S.; (2) emphasis on quotidian embodied experience; (3) attention to the intermeshed dimensions of social identities and oppression; (4) attention to the omissions of Latinx experiences in philosophical discussions that presume a white male norm; (5) appreciation for historical processes that give Latinx identity meaning; (6) the development of experiential knowledge that can re-shape dominant norms of *Latinidad* (*IB*, 10). Drawing on Latina/x feminist philosophies, primarily those of María Lugones and Gloria Anzaldúa, Ortega develops an account of the self that appreciates its multiplicity while simultaneously attending to the ways the experience of the multiplicitous self is revealed through conditions of not-being-at-ease (*IB*, 61). To be multiplicitous is to have multiple social identities (e.g. race, class, sexuality, dis/ability, ethnicity, religion) that must be negotiated while being both a part of distinct worlds and in between them (*IB*, 75). However, the multiplicitous self still retains existential continuity despite its multiplicity. It is flexible, decentered, and never fully integrated, but also capable of highlighting or shifting different identities in different contexts (*IB*, 76). In Ortega's terms:

In sum, the multiplicitous self should not be understood by way of additive analysis. Rather, this self has experiences shaped by the inter-sectional intermeshedness of various social identities. I am not the sum of my social identities—member of the middle-class + woman + Latina + professor + other identities. The intermeshedness of these identities continually informs my experiences as I am being-in-worlds and being-between-worlds. Moreover, understanding the multiplicitous self as flexible or “mobile” means recognizing this self's decenteredness, or not having an *a priori* central identity. (*IB*, 76)

The multiplicitous self is one that continuously travels. As a result, the question of home(s) and belonging are also key in Ortega's analysis. For Ortega, full membership and belonging in worlds is an imaginary space of mythic formation that needs to be reframed. She proposes the concept of “home-tactis,” practices that grant new possibilities of belonging as well as senses of being with others without appealing to a fixed location of home that require claims of authenticity (*IB*, 205). To this effect, consider the following lines:

The home question is particularly difficult for the multiplicitous self whose life and context are such that she has to continually world-travel, and thus the home question becomes a question of *homes*. Reflection on such a question paradoxically shatters any illusion of there being a definite place of belonging, while it also shatters the very multiplicity of our selves by way of feeling and a questioning—that feeling of wanting to come home and that question of whether there is a home (or even homes) for me—as if there were a will to belong in the same way that Nietzsche claims there is a will to truth that inspires us to many a venture. (*IB*, 197)

Ortega illuminates the ways in which being a multiplicitous self requires reflection on the notion of home whereby where one feels at home becomes a question about the fluidity of location and relation. As a result, the multiplicitous self develops strategies of place-making. Ortega's *In-Between* is itself an example of one such strategy. Ortega opens the book by noting that the text functions as her hometactic:

Feeling comfortable in the world of philosophy has not been easy for me. This book is my *hometactic*, my attempt at finding a sense of belonging and ease within a discipline that forgets the contributions of those regarded as "others." (*IB*, 1)

In developing her account of the multiplicitous self, Ortega draws from a large body of work developed by Latina/x peoples who have taken the concept of *experience* as central to their work. Latina/x feminist thought has used the concept of experience as one from which to develop theories of selfhood and identity (*IB*, 7). Ortega's scholarly corpus is a testament to the importance of centering experience in developing accounts of self, but it also connects other authors who have developed philosophically rich conversations about identity. In philosophy, the work of Ofelia Schutte, Linda Martín Alcoff, Jacqueline Martínez, María Lugones, Juanita Ramos, and Paula Moya have been deeply influential as each takes seriously the role of experience in shaping how we think about being Latina/x. Furthermore, Ortega reminds her readers that the centrality of experience to Latina/x feminist thought should not be all that surprising given that experiential accounts of what it means to be Latina/x describe complexities and multiplicities that are often ignored from many social spaces, philosophy chief among them. She writes: "Their appeal to experience is, in my view, a disclosure, a making visible, audible, a making perceptible, those beings in marginalized and nondominant positions whose histories have been previously erased, ignored, or covered up" (*IB*, 7).

The attention that experience has received in philosophy also reminds us of the complexities encompassed by the very term: Latina/x. It should be clear that the term Latinx/a is not monolithic (see chapter 11). Rather, it encapsulates a range of identities framed by conditions of diaspora, migration, immigration, border dwelling-crossing as well as sexuality, spirituality, ethnicity/race, and class. By centering Latina/x experience, U.S. based Latina/x feminist thought has been able to closely and critically examine the complexity of identity, which is often framed in social and political spaces that are unkind and unwelcoming to such multiplicity. Hence, we should not think of one Latina/x feminism, but rather of multiple feminisms whose work bridges ideas of experience, oppression, and identity in ways that extend into other hemispheric terrains and speak to a wide range of audiences.

Translocating Thought: Hemispheric Dialogues Between Latin/a America and Latina/x Feminisms

In closing, I want to highlight the importance of the concepts of translation and translocation found in the work of Latin/a American and Latina/x feminisms. Translation and translocation signal the way in which the landscape of the Latin/a American and Latina/x feminisms pushes readers to consider the importance of context and the migrations of ideas in a globalized world. Specifically, translation and translocation highlights the claim that ideas travel and can re-center the “North” as the producer of thought and marginalize other voices. This theme is directly taken up in *Translocalities/Translocalidades* (2014) through a series of essays that interrogate the travel of discourses within politically embedded terrains across diverse localities, especially between Latin America and the U.S.³⁰ In doing so the book brings together many voices that develop a politics of translocation attentive to the heterogeneity of Latinidades as well as to the diverse subject positions that shape Latin/a/x American lives across multiple borders.³¹

These texts are extremely important as we consider the future of Latina/x and Latin/a American feminisms and ideas about movement, borders, travel, and geopolitics shaping our epistemic practices. Centering concerns about the complexities of translation, with the legacy of colonialism that permeate all facets of life, Latina/x and Latin/a American thought is pushing the conversation in directions that can better appreciate the complexities of the world that we currently inhabit. For instance, in 2016 the journal *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* published a two-part special issue dedicated to thinking about the relationship between political and cultural translation in the context of black feminist diasporic thought. The editors sought to center Afro-Latinx feminist voices in order to interrupt the tendency to over-emphasize English-speaking Black women as the only voices of black diasporic thought.³² As such, the volume takes the project of translation as “politically and theoretically indispensable to forging feminist, pro-social justice, antiracist, postcolonial/decolonial, and anti-imperial political alliances and epistemologies.”³³ Hemispheric dialogues within Latin/a American and Latin/x feminisms continues to demonstrate that there is much work to be done, but provides a methodological framework that appreciates the many complicated historical braids and strands that make the work both necessary and possible.

Conclusion

I have sought to demonstrate the existence of a rich and diverse philosophical tradition by providing an expository overview of the vast terrain of thought that constitutes Latin American and Latinx feminisms. However, there is much work that remains to be done. Scholars need to look for ideas in spaces and places often regarded as non-philosophical, as the bodies in

question were never fully rendered human. We must understand that the quest for wisdom is never pure and is always related to our social and historical context. As Ortega states in the conclusion of *In-Between*:

[L]et's reconstruct the way we do philosophy; let's drop the false idols and break the imposing statues that are gatekeepers of the profession; and let's ignore the empty promises of justice and neutrality and not allow those who have no disposition for understanding each other's way of life define what really should be a love wisdom, not of exclusion. (*IB*, 220)

Notes

- 1 Paccacerqua, "Specters in Latin American Philosophy," 18.
- 2 Gargallo, "La historicidad de las ideas feministas en américa latina," 18.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 18.
- 4 For a more in-depth account of this claim see the following series of essays by Lugones: "Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System," "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," and "Coloniality of Gender."
- 5 Gargallo, "Presentación," 12.
- 6 Gargallo, "Presentación," 2010, 12.
- 7 Femenias, "Philosophical Geneologies and Feminism in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz," 131.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 153.
- 9 Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, "Response to Sister Filotea," 54–55.
- 10 Femenias, "Philosophical Geneologies and Feminism in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz," 137.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 135.
- 12 Inés de la Cruz, "Response to Sister Filotea," 54.
- 13 Two notable examples include: Flora Tristán (1803–1844) and Rita Cetina Gutiérrez (1846–1908). Tristán was a French descended woman living in Peru who advocated for women's equality in the context of workers' rights. Gutiérrez was from Mexico and is often cited as Mexico's first feminist because of her activism. She founded La Siempreviva in Mérida, which was Mexico's first secular school for poor girls and art college for young women.
- 14 Capetillo, *Nation of Women*, 70. Cited in text using abbreviation NW and page number.
- 15 Valle Ferrer, *Luisa Capetillo*, 48.
- 16 Ramos, "Introducción," 14.
- 17 Some notable figures in this conversation include Francesca Gargallo and Grace Prada-Ortiz. Both have immensely aided in assembling a different archive form which to think about women's ideas. Furthermore, the work of Ofelia Schutte bridges Latin America and the United States. Her career devoted a lot of energy to Latin American feminist dialogues that bridge South-North hemispheres. Her contribution to the anthology *Feminist Philosophy in Latin America and Spain* was one of the first to make the writings of Latin American feminist philosophers accessible in English. Among these is the work of Graciela Hierro, as well as Celia Amorós, and Maria Luisa Femenias, all of whom continue to occupy important nodes in Latin American feminist conversations.
- 18 Another key example can be found in Vera Yamuni (1917–2003). Regarded as the one who brought feminism to Mexico, Yamuni is an impactful yet understudied figure in the history of Mexican feminisms. She was born in Costa Rica to

Lebanese parents and emigrated to Mexico, where she earned a masters and doctorate in philosophy from the Universidad Autónoma de Mexico (UNAM). She studied under José Gaos, and her merits as a scholar are most reflected in the diversity of her academic strengths. She was not only an expert in humanities and languages, but also went on to study medicine-surgery. As a result, her scholarly interests were expansive: philosophy, languages, medicine, feminism, and Arabic thought.

- 19 I use the “x” in both Xicana and Latinx throughout the chapter to represent the multiple ways in which these terms are written, articulated, and experienced. In the context of Xicana, the use of the “x” links to the indigenous Nahuatl language and serves as a linguistic memory of Indigenous culture. In the context of Latinx, the use of the “x” serves to intervene on the gendered nature of language and the omissions it produces. I do not adjudicate on what the most appropriate use of term is, but rather honor their uses by its multiple representations.
- 20 Garcia, “Introduction” to *Chicana Feminist Thought*, 2.
- 21 Arredondo et al., “Introduction” to *Chicana Feminisms*, 1.
- 22 The use of the phrase “theory in the flesh” harkens to the canonical publication of *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings of Radical Women of Color*, edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, which brought together the writings of women of color across many race/ethnic/class struggles. It is the title of the second part of the book which theorized the struggles of women of color from multiple positionalities as they confront white racism. There are many important figures that form the tradition of Ch/Xicana feminist thought. To name a few: Cherrie Moraga, Emma Pérez, Norma Alarcón, Martha P. Cotera, Chela Sandoval, Laura Pérez, and Gloria Anzaldúa.
- 23 A very many thanks to Rafael Vizcaíno who recently brought to my attention that her work has been used to theorize the border between North and South Korea.
- 24 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 19. Cited in text using the abbreviation *B* and page number.
- 25 In philosophy, U.S. based Latina/x feminist scholars have been working with the ideas found in the corpus of Anzaldúa’s work. *Hypatia* published a special cluster on Latina feminism (Spring 2016) edited by Mariana Ortega, which brought together diverse lineages of Latina/x feminist thought. Anzaldúa’s work permeated a lot of the essays represented in the cluster. For instance: Paccacerqua, “Gloria Anzaldúa’s Affective Logic of *Volverse Una*”; Pitts, “Gloria E. Anzaldúa’s *Autohistoria-teoría*”; Ruíz, “Linguistic Alterity and the Multiplicitous Self.” Each exemplifies the ways Anzaldúa has bridged into philosophy by treating her as a philosophical figure with a rich body of work.
- 26 The Roundtable on Latina/x Feminisms coordinated by Mariana Ortega is one important locale that has largely contributed to the cultivating rich theoretical conversations with Anzaldúa’s scholarly corpus. The Roundtable on Latina feminism has served as a borderspace of theoretical production that brings together diverse lineages of Latina/x feminisms. As such, it has greatly contributed to the dissemination of Latina/x feminist philosophy, which treats the work of Latina/x subjects as philosophical without any hesitation, but also honors the diverse histories that have made Latina/x feminisms possible. “In the Flesh and Word: Latina Feminist Philosophers Collective Labor,” co-authored by Cynthia Paccacerqua, Andrea J. Pitts, Natalie Cisneros, Elena Flores Ruíz, and myself speaks to the importance of the Roundtable as a philosophical space of political gathering that bridges worlds and honors complex differences.
- 27 Two years after her death the Society for the Study of Anzaldúa was founded in order to provide a space for Anzaldúa’s vision of resistance in difference and community to be continued. Moreover, her personal papers (correspondence, written works, audio tape interviews, reviews, clippings, photographs, posters,

artwork, and collected materials) can be currently found in the Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin. Her alters are housed in the Special Collection and Archives of the University of California, Santa Cruz, where she was a graduate student in literature and had nearly completed her Ph.D. at the time of her death.

- 28 One notable example in this genealogy is Maria Lugones, whose work has also been extremely important in Latina/x and Latin/a American philosophy. Lugones' book, *Pilgrimage/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions* (2003) takes up challenges and ideas posited by Anzaldúa. Throughout the book Lugones draws on Anzaldúa's reflections of mestiza consciousness, anger, and internalized whiteness to give her own account of ontological pluralism, intermeshed oppressions, and the possibilities of coalitional struggle.
- 29 Ortega, *In-Between*, 18. Cited in text using the abbreviation *IB* and page number.
- 30 Alvarez, "Translocational Feminist Politics of Translation," 1.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 2.
- 32 Alvarez et al., "Translations Across Black Feminist Diasporas," v-ix.
- 33 *Ibid.*, v.

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