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Gloria Anzaldúa's Decolonizing Aesthetics: On Silence and Bearing Witness

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ABSTRACT: This article is one in a series of attempts on my part to think (from) the in-between of traditionally juxtaposed claims of voice versus silence. It takes seriously both claims that voice is lived as liberatory by many, on the one hand, and that the deployment of voice may not only reify colonial power dynamics that continue to oppress many, but also that words may be inadequate to convey or remember the humiliation, pain, and systematic degradation of trauma and violence, on the other. Thus situated, this paper turns to silence to locate resources for the renewal of sense. Specifically, I turn to Gloria Anzaldúa's iterations of the myth of la Llorona in "My Black *Angelos*" and *Prietita and the Ghost Woman* and propose that her deployment of silences is such that the past is remembered in its absence, as loss. As such, I suggest, the deployment of deep silences is key to a decolonizing aesthetics; it bears witness to experiences of coloniality by upholding, rather than eliding, opacity, thus inaugurating decolonizing sensibilities attuned to silences rather than speech and transparency.

KEYWORDS: decolonizing aesthetics, Gloria Anzaldúa, silence, bearing witness, spectrality, la Llorona

> And what if we also learn to listen for silence?
>
> —JILL STAUFFER, *Ethical Loneliness*

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This article is one in a series of attempts on my part to think (from) the in-between of traditionally juxtaposed claims of voice versus silence. It takes seriously both claims that voice is lived as liberatory by many, on the one hand, and that words may be inadequate to bear witness to the humiliation, pain, and systematic degradation of trauma and violence, on the other. Thus situated, I turn to silence to locate resources for the renewal of sense. Specifically, I propose that the mobilization of silences can be a powerful decolonizing praxis. Attending to Gloria Anzaldúa's iterations of the myth of la Llorona in "My Black *Angelos*" and *Prietita and the Ghost Woman*,[1] I argue that Anzaldúa's deployment of silences positions the reader to remember the colonial past as loss, that is, through an experience of its loss. I suggest that this modality of bearing witness matters to a decolonizing aesthetics in at least two ways. First, it bears witness to experiences of coloniality while avoiding the recapitulation of what Alia Al-Saji calls *specularization*, i.e., rendering experiences of coloniality readily available for dissection and inspection by the colonizing gaze.[2] Second, it avoids fixing the past into an eternal present; instead, it eventuates the presencing of traces of multiple pasts, ultimately decentering the coloniality of time, one of the central structuring mechanisms of coloniality.

The case for deep silence begins by giving up "voice" as the ubiquitous liberatory tool for emancipation in search for what is lost in its all-encompassing reach. To this end, in part one, I think through the case of the three Native American shields, a case that brings to light the ways in which coloniality limits Western understandings of silence while also inviting us to grapple with the generative potential of silence for decolonizing meaning-making. In part two, I turn to Anzaldúa's mythopoetic writing and suggest that la Llorona accomplishes the task of remembering the past as loss by evoking traces of the lost past through a poetic language of images, affect, and, most important, generative silences. As such, I argue, the deployment of deep silences is key to a decolonizing aesthetics; it "gives voice" to experiences of colonization without objectifying or translating them into familiar schemas, thus inaugurating decolonizing sensibilities that position the reader to hear the other in her difference.

The Limits of Voice

Within the feminist tradition, the importance of speech and finding one's voice for women to articulate their experiences of oppression is well recognized.[3] The call to "speak up" and "break the silence" to which violence

relegates its victims traverses both racial and disciplinary lines, shaping white and women of color feminisms, rallying academic and public invectives for a more just society. As Carrillo Rowe and Malhotra point out, the binary logic of speech versus silence and the almost commonsensical equation of silence with powerlessness and oppression in the Western tradition from Aristotle to Audre Lorde presumes a political imperative: for an individual or group to gain power and "to resist and transform the conditions of their oppression," they "must activate their *voice*."[4]

As the denouncing work carried out by feminists within and outside academia attests, harmful manifestations of silencing are plentiful. The aim of this section is not to dismiss the importance of giving voice to the voiceless, especially because finding one's voice is lived as liberatory by many. Rather, informed by instances in which voice fails to bear witness to a violent past or cultural practices, I seek to locate in silence resources for the renewal of sense, for making sense of experiences that would otherwise remain unheard. Consider the case of the three Native American shields found in a cave in Utah by the Pectol family in 1926 and repatriated earlier this century to the Navajo tribe. Although the nuances of the case cannot be accurately conveyed here because of space constraints, what is of interest to us is the process whereby the shields were repatriated and the role that silence played in this process.

According to the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Reparation Act (NAGPRA), remains of Native American origin are repatriated according to "claims to ownership," established according to lineal descent, the relationship to the land on which the remains are found, and cultural affiliation with the relics.[5] Remarkably, the NAGPRA adjudicates claims to ownership by taking into account oral history equally as scientific evidence. Yet, as Jill Stauffer points out, even a piece of legislation like the NAGPRA designed to redress past harms in ways attentive to the incommensurate forms of meaning-making in US legalism and Native American culture may fail to listen to claims made by tribal representatives.[6] This is what happened in the instance of three shields whose ownership could not be clearly established through scientific evidence. The tribes interested in the shields had to make arguments in support of their claims. Lee Ann Kreutzer—the archeologist in charge of adjudicating the case—awarded the shields to the Navajo tribe over the contending joint filing from the Ute/Paiute tribes, on the basis that the latter's claim "lacked[ed] credibility [and persuasion]. In fairness to other claimants and the general public," she stated, "the National Park Service cannot simply accept a

tribe's unexplained, unelaborated, and unjustified request for reparation."[7] Although the Ute/Paiute tribes presented a more conventional legal argument for ownership *contra* the oral history of the shields offered by the Navajo tribe, the former remained silent about central aspects of their religion, insisting that "objects belonging to the sacred realm cannot legitimately be claimed by any particular tribe or individual."[8] As this example illustrates, even though the conception of what counts as a reliable speech act was expanded to include oral history, which, traditionally, is discarded as inadmissible evidence in courts of law qua hearsay, this case still presents us with the limits of Western understandings of the phenomenon of silence. What Kreutzer missed—what she could not hear—was the sense of the Ute/Paiute's silence—what could not be said.

In light of these reflections, we should ask ourselves: *Why* is the Ute/Paiute tribes' silence read as absence, non-sense, or lack of persuasive evidence? What are the structures and motives such that silence is immediately perceived and conceived as silencing? The inadequacies of current interpretative frameworks to listen for silences should not come as a surprise for, as Stauffer points out, "in the discourse of Western legalism, . . . silence cannot be its own phenomenon but always rather stands for something that simply has not yet been spoken."[9] In other words, in the Western tradition, the phenomenon of silence is tendentially conceived over and against the fullness of voice or signification, at best, as a protective withholding, or, at worst, as either irrelevant or an obstacle to the eventuation of meaning.[10] Elsewhere, I refer to the processes characteristic of coloniality whereby the depth and multiplicity of silence are eviscerated as the "coloniality of silence" and argue that this flattening is central to coloniality in that it forecloses negotiations of reality that can be fecund sources of radical meaning-making that would undermine key presuppositions of Western theories of meaning.[11] Within a colonial context, embodied responses that are not normed by colonial voice like the Ute/Paiute's silence surrounding the sense of objects belonging to the sacred realm fall through the cracks; rather than being taken in their strangeness and allowed to displace usual expectations, what cannot be heard by and from the colonizer's standpoint is marked as unintelligible and nonsensical—as *mere* silence. Experiences and expressions of silence that can be negotiations of reality and fecund sources of decolonizing meaning-making are vacated of their depth and thickness, of sense and being. As cases like this suggest, "the loss . . . is that of the opportunity to recognize that there are other forms of judgment and

meaning-making" like the slow-paced consensus process adopted by many tribes.[12] So what would it mean not to dismiss the silence of testimonies like the Ute/Paiute's tribes? In other words, "what if we also learn to listen for silence?"[13] The outcome, as I will show in the following section, is the development of aesthetic sensibilities that decenter the modern/colonial system. But, first, what does it mean to listen for silences?

As María Lugones insightfully reminds us, decoloniality entails resisting the "epistemological habit of erasing,"[14] which, in the context of this project, entails hesitating before translating the silences that our ears are slowly becoming accustomed to tracing into familiar meanings. Concretely, this means that "silence" should not be understood over and against the fullness of signification, as an already available utterance being unspoken or silenced within an already constituted domain of meaning. These are the kinds of silence commonplace within the Western tradition; they are silences like the one invoked within the feminist tradition whereby sexual violence, political repression, or power asymmetries prevent vulnerable populations from contributing to the conversation, or the self-imposed silence strategically deployed as withholding to evade and resist oppressive authority. Rather, the silences at stake in this project should be approached in terms of what I call "deep silences," i.e., silences pregnant with meanings that have not yet been voiced and could not be foreseen in advanced. The deep silence of the Ute/Paiute tribes did not index an absence of sense nor the covering over of an already established, but withheld meaning. As such, the meaning of the shields could not be expressed propositionally—nor, at the very least, doing so would alter their sense. Rather, the tribes' deep silence opened onto modalities of sense making that operate prior to conceptual/propositional thinking, revealing sense to be the ephemeral accomplishment of ongoing processes deeply intertwined with the local geography, sacred rituals, and the carnal relations tradition institutes with the land and the people partaking in them. Thus, deep silences give way to meanings where coloniality and its desideratum of transparency hears none.

In other words, testimonies like that of the Ute/Paiute tribes denounce the tendency to subsume the other's opacity into familiar schemas or meanings, demanding instead that the listener dwells in that unsettling experience of deep silence akin to when, as Ofelia Schutte puts it, "another's speech, or some aspect of it, resonates in me as a kind of strangeness, a kind of displacement of the usual expectation."[15] These deep silences, when

harkened to rather than translated into available schemas, often interrupt familiar expectations, disorienting one's corporeal arrangement within the world and inaugurating a reorganization around new emerging centers. In the following section, I turn to Anzaldúa's iterations of the myth of la Llorona and suggest that her mobilization of deep silences is a powerful tool for a decolonizing aesthetics that seeks to bear witness to colonial experiences of marginalization without the recapitulation of transparency or the coloniality of time.

Listening For Silences

At its most basic level, the myth of la Llorona centers around the grief of a mother who has lost her children and wanders in search of them, weeping.[16] As it turns out, the woman killed her children by drowning them in a stream. Overtaken by grief and despair when she realizes what she has done, she takes her own life. Wandering from stream to stream, la Llorona is doomed to exist as a ghostly figure for eternity, desperately searching for her children's lost souls. It is her cries, her *llantos*—"aiii! Mis hijos! Donde están mis hijos!?"—that give her the name of la Llorona. Traditionally, the myth functions as a patriarchal allegory, as a cautionary tale for women, instructing them to conform to established social expectations. The story often ends with a warning to children to behave and to not wander outdoors at night, for they may fall into la Llorona's clutches.

Differently from the reclaiming of other mythological figures central to Chicana culture, the recuperation of la Llorona has been crucial to Chicana identity insofar as the grief over the lost children that the myth makes visible symbolically bears witness to the concrete losses and dispossessions of a people. "La Llorona," Anzaldúa explains in an interview with Patti Blanco, "typifies [her] reflection on the lost land, the lost homeland, because we're a people that, first of all, had an identity imposed on us by the Spaniards and then later by the Anglos. . . . Now, as modern-day mestizas and mestizos, as modern-day Chicanos, our language is not permitted."[17] In this sense, the myth of la Llorona functions as a sort of *testimonio*, bearing witness to experiences of marginalization and oppression, a strategy commonly accepted within feminist, decolonial, and juridical debates as a "method of collaborating with those who are silenced."[18] As cultural theorist Tey Diana Rebolledo points out, the recuperation of the myth facilitates the "mourning

[of Chicanas'] lost culture, their lost selves"—in sum, of a lost past of cultural, linguistic, and biological lineages foreclosed through the raping of women, seizing of land, and legal dispossession of cultural and linguistic identities.[19] In addition to the culturally empowering role that the feminist reclamations of the myth have played in Chicana culture,[20] what is relevant for the current analysis is the *modality* whereby Anzaldúa's iterations of the myth bear witness to the lost past and the avenues for decolonizing reinscriptions such witnessing makes possible. In Anzaldúa's iterations of the myth, la Llorona evokes the past indirectly, through a poetic language of images, affect, and, deep silences, which give access to what cannot be perceived or stated directly.

In "My Black *Angelos*," for example, Anzaldúa summons the pre-Colombian Aztec lineages of la Llorona by deploying images of serpents, which evoke Cihuacoatl (snake woman) and Coatlicue (the serpent skirt)—central figures in the Aztec pantheon and female deities that the traditional recounting of the myth seeks to displace with male centered Christianity.[21] Or take *Prietita and the Ghost Woman*, where Anzaldúa constellates the myth with symbolically charged animal figures like deer, salamanders, and pumas that elicit Aztec mythology and ancestry. Most importantly, Anzaldúa recollects the past against the backdrop of the wailing of la Llorona, which affectively charges the story with memories of colonial conquest and grief over the loss of children, cultural identity, and land:

> Aiiii aiiii aiiiiiii
> She is crying for the dead child
> The lover gone, the lover not yet come:
> Her *grito* splinters the night
> Fear drenches me.[22]

As we are learning to hear, this ancestral past is not spoken *for* or *about*; rather, it presences indirectly, through images and affect. The past that we come to apprehend is evoked in its spectral presence, i.e., through *traces* such as la Llorona's cries which fleetingly echo through the night, in the reverberations and fluidity of water, and the silences of the sacred animals that guide Prietita through King Ranch.

The past's spectral presencing becomes stark in the second stanza of "My Black *Angelos*," when we are made aware that it is the narrator's fear that summons la Llorona. As Domino Renee Perez observes, by

pointing out that the narrator "stink[s] of carrion," and that it is her smell that lures la Llorona into "turning upwind tracking me,"[23] Anzaldúa is suggesting not only that some part of the narrator is dead or decaying, that "the narrator has let die within her the history and spirit of Coatlicue and Cihuacoatl, a death that denies her access to indigenous female figures of power. It also ventures that it is by virtue of that absence or loss that la Llorona "returns to claim this lost child to enable a necessary and frightening recovery of what has been lost."[24] In this sense, the past presences for those to whom the echoes of Aztec mythology resonate, evoking more complex *historias*; it eventuates for those who are willing to harken to the vibrations of images that may, at first, be foreign to their cultural background, and let the images guide the inquiry. In either case, the past presences fleetingly, through words not fully spoken, through suggestions and carnal relations. It is thus—spectrally—that la Llorona gives way to an experience whereby loss, in María Acosta López's words, "is not solved but denounced, in which the silences heard by the spectator allow the unheard of, which always speaks from the present's excess, to echo and take form time and again."[25]

In my view, this spectral modality of bearing witness reveals a fundamental aspect of a decolonizing aesthetics that seeks to go beyond colonial epistemologies and the desideratum of transparency. This is so in at least two ways. First, it avoids *specularization*, which, following Césaire, Al-Saji defines as the tendency of rendering the colonized's experiences spectacles for white observers. This consideration is especially relevant considering the danger we face when striving to make colonized bodies, experiences, and *historias* visible. As she explains, "even when the invisible workings of the flesh are revealed in their activity as well as their passivity, their being rendered a spectacle introduces . . . the danger of 'thingification.'"[26] In light of these considerations, we see how Anzaldúa's bearing witness to the colonial past in its absenting matters in that it makes "visible" colonial *historias* without rendering them transparent and consumable by the colonizer spectator, by attending to expressive manners that do not fix and dissect experiences.

My invitation to spectrally bearing witness resonates with Mariana Ortega's suggestion, in "Spectral Perception and Ghostly Subjectivity," that a decolonial feminism "engage[s] in haunting," which she describes as a "methodology of making visible what is supposed to remain invisible."[27] I agree with Ortega that "dwelling with ghosts" is the first step in

learning to bear witness, "to see and to feel anew."[28] Rather than striving for visibility, however, I depart from Ortega and propose that spectrality should be upheld as a modality of bearing witness to the experience of those whose experiences have and continue to be transversed by colonial violence. The risk of not doing so would be using modalities of expression that are entrenched in colonial legacies of oppression and domination. To be clear, la Llorona avoids capitulating to transparency by effecting the remembering and mourning of the colonial past *as loss*, through silences. Rather than simply attending to and making audible the voices that have been hidden and "relegated to silences, to passivity,"[29] it seems to me that sensing against the grain of colonial epistemologies, ontologies, and even sensibilities requires bearing witness to the past by listening to its silences, i.e., being with them, allowing their strangeness and opacity to qualitatively alter their perception of reality without translating or speaking for them.

But there is more. In my view, this modality of bearing witness to the past whereby one harkens to deep silences matters to a decolonizing project because of the relationship with time it institutes. Specifically, myth's spectral witnessing is such that the past it is tasked to remember is not fixed or memorialized into an eternal present but, rather, held open, continuously and retroactively reinscribed. The memorialization of the past would be especially problematic given what scholars call the "coloniality of time" affecting and structuring colonial life. Central to much decolonial literature is the claim that the coloniality of power and knowledge institutes a new temporal relation between the European and the non-European whereby the geopolitical, historical, and cultural landscapes marked by race are projected backward into the past of a historical trajectory whose culmination is European.[30] That is, coloniality is a matter of time; the coloniality of power and knowledge relies upon and partakes in the reification of a narrative of linear progression and human evolution whereby "cultural differences were classified according to their proximity to modernity or to tradition."[31] Within this colonial chronology, the colonized are dehumanized through racialization at the level of temporality, specifically, by being relegated to and overdetermined by a mythical past.

In light of these remarks, we begin to see how any decolonizing project ought to be keenly aware of its relationship with temporality. Any reprise of the colonial past that repeats or memorializes it into an eternal present would not undermine the coloniality of time but reify a linear temporal trajectory whereby the colonized continue to be overdetermined by the

mythical past. The difficulty, however, lies in the fact that the present of modern, European reason provides the limits for *all* human knowledge and existence (or what are recognized as such). As Alejandro Vallega explains, "the time of this consciousness becomes a disposition, a sensibility, that situates thought and any possible human knowledge. This means that even before experience may count as phenomenon or knowledge, even before thought begins to be formulated, it will be put under the yoke of this single present."[32] That is, temporality's invisible work is such that it demarcates a priori the field of possibility of any thought/knowledge; no matter its content, "its status and validity as thought/knowledge will be situated . . . under the judgment of the coloniality of power and knowledge."[33] As such, undoing coloniality cannot take place exclusively at the level of thought/knowledge or, as section one of this paper began to show, at the level of the spoken word. Without the undoing of the coloniality of time, even positive appropriations of the colonial past or silenced indigenous voices would remain under the attraction of the temporal prejudice of modernity and, yet again, be signified as a cluster of antiquated attachments; hence, the importance for a decolonizing project to put forth novel sensibilities—a decolonizing aesthetic, if you will—that undo the totalizing and transparent system of linear temporality. Concretely, this means bearing witness to the past such that the generativity of linear, colonial time is disrupted, decentered into the playfulness and imaginary variability of the past. Following Acosta López, we can say that a decolonizing aesthetics "must present the past as what can never be fully present, i.e., as that which always exceeds the very same possibilities of its own representation."[34]

It is this decentering that deep silences effect throughout Anzaldúa's iterations of the myth. The work of silences in myth interrupts linear temporality by suspending familiar narratives and framings, by instituting timelags that make possible the resignification of the past. We witness such interruptions in *Prietita and the Ghost Woman*. It is when Prietita moves further away from the fence, which symbolizes the familiar, a home perspective of sorts, and ventures into the unknown guided by silent animals that she hears the cries of la Llorona, the echoes of a lost past. The silences opened up by the *historia* suspend the reader's presuppositions, making her hesitate before translating la Llorona's predicament into familiar meanings, before rendering the eventuating past in terms of colonial frames of reference. At first, as the second stanza of "My Black *Angelos*" quoted above makes clear, the reader falls back onto the internalized and familiar colonial frames of reference, reading la Llorona as a menacing figure howling at

night. Yet, as the narrative progresses, the silences and interruptions invite the reader to reconsider her assumptions, situating the grief of la Llorona in the lineages of colonial violence and conquest summoned through the images and silences deployed by Anzaldúa. This contextualizing allows the myth to "speak" differently, to tell different stories of an Aztec mythological pantheon rich with female deities like la Llorona, who now guides Prietita to the rue and her family, which symbolize healing and the reclaiming of a previously disavowed ancestral lineage. La Curandera's rebuttal to the general surprise that la Llorona did not conform to her menacing stereotype, but led Prietita back home, is indicative of this reclaimed narrative: "perhaps she is not what others think she is,"[35] Doña Lola points out.

Remarkably, however, Anzaldúa's mobilization of deep silences interrupts not only "specular and spectacular renderings of suffering and colonial violence"[36] but also teleological visions of liberation and the linearity of time that continue to oppress and dehumanize the colonized. Through the mobilization of deep silences, Anzaldúa brings about a different aesthetic sensibility, ultimately allowing for multiple temporalities to coexist. As we just saw, the silent interruptions throughout the myth allow for a multiplicity of pasts to resonate simultaneously: we hear echoes of the traditional interpretation of the myth through the cries of la Llorona, which invoke the violence and loss of colonial conquest, and the weight of a past to which the colonized are relegated. But we also feel the reverberations of some of the central figures in the Aztec pantheon that the traditional recounting of the myth seeks to displace. In evoking the simultaneity of diverse temporal lineages, Anzaldúa is not calling for a simple return to a colonial past or a romanticized native lineage. Rather, in their spectral coexistence, past lineages previously neatly organizable within the linearity of colonial time now encroach upon each other, yielding novel decolonizing meanings. We thus see how bearing witness through deep silences effects a shift in sensibilities, eventuating a decolonizing aesthetics whereby pasts coexist in the present in their absenting, as traces or virtual planes that resonate in the present as open and fecund sets of possibilities.

Conclusion

In "Toward a Black Feminist Poethics," Denise Ferreira Da Silva puts forth the notion of a Black Feminist Poethics, suggesting that such a Poethics would emancipate the category of Blackness from entrenched ways of

knowing that produced it in the first place as a "referent of commodity." As such, she proposes, Blackness would announce a whole set of *possibilities* for knowing, doing, and existing otherwise; it would open up onto "another praxis and wander in the world."[37] It is this praxis, fecund with possibilities for existing otherwise, that, in my view, Anzaldúa's mobilization of deep silences brings about: la Llorona eventuates a conception of reality whereby the real does not exist in juxtaposition to the imagination, nor is shackled by the bounds of what is present (and transparent) to consciousness. Rather, la Llorona's "presence" is textured by virtual planes, haunted by the ghosts of multiple pasts that are summoned differentially depending on one's carnal relations with history, myth, and violence. Anzaldúa's mobilization of deep silences allows for the paradoxical task of both remembering and forgetting the past, thus not only avoiding *specularization*, but keeping open this process of remembering that "should always be regarded as an ongoing project."[38] Thus, deep silences eventuate decolonizing avenues of feminist insubordination that at once question our inherited beliefs and struggle to find a new equilibrium without appealing to stable and counter-hegemonic narratives or tools.

NOTES

1. Gloria Anzaldúa,"My Black *Angelos*," in *Borderlands/la frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 2007) and *Prietita and the Ghost Woman* (San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1995).

2. Alia Al-Saji, "Touching the Wounds of Colonial Duration: Fanon, Husserl, and Critical Phenomenology of Racialized Affect," lecture, Collegium Phaenomenologium, Italy, July 15–19, 2019.

3. Elaine Hedges and Shelley Fisher Fishkin, eds., *Listening to Silences: New Essays in Feminist Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

4. Aimee Carrillo Rowe and Sheena Malhotra, eds., S*ilence, Feminism, Power: Reflections at the Edge of Sound* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1; order rearranged.

5. Debora Threedy, "Claiming the Shields: Law, Anthropology, and the Role of Storytelling in a NAGPRA Repatriation Case Study," *Journal of Land, Resources, and Environmental Law* 29, no. 1 (2009): 96. As Threedy points out, prior to the passing of the NAGPRA, white Americans assumed legal rights of ownership over Native American remains and cultural artifacts, which would be stored in boxes or displayed in museums.

6. Jill Stauffer, *Ethical Loneliness: The Injustice of not Being Heard* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 98.

7. Quoted in Threedy, "Claiming the Shields," 117.
8. Ibid., 118.
9. Stauffer, *Ethical Loneliness,* 101.
10. Ofelia Schutte, "Cultural Alterity: Cross-Cultural Communication and Feminist Theory in North-South Contexts," *Hypatia* 13, no. 2 (1998): 53–72.
11. Martina Ferrari, "Questions of Silence: On the Emancipatory Limits of Voice and the Coloniality of Silence," *Hypatia* 35, no. 1 (2020): 134.
12. Stauffer, *Ethical Loneliness,* 102.
13. Ibid., 104.
14. María Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," *Hypatia* 25, no. 4 (2010): 753.
15. Schutte, "Cultural Alterity," 56.
16. Throughout her corpus, Anzaldúa appeals to several stories central to Mexican and Aztec mythology—like those of Coatlicue, la Llorona, la Chingada, la Virgen de Guadalupe, and Coyolxauhqui—that "are used against women and against certain races to control, regulate, and manipulate [them]" (*Interviews/ Entrevistas*, ed. Ana Louise Keating [New York: Routledge, 2000], 219). She rewrites these myths, whose figures thus function as hinges between the lineages of colonial conquest and decolonial insubordination, collective trauma and healing.
17. Patti Blanco, "An Interview with Gloria Anzaldúa," *University of Arizona Poetry Center Newsletter* 16, no. 1 (November 1991), https://poetry.arizona.edu/blog/interview-gloria-anzaldúa.
18. Yomaira C. Figueroa, "Faithful Witnessing as Practice: Decolonial Readings of Shadows of Your Black Memory and The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao," *Hypatia* 30, no. 4 (2015): 642.
19. Tey Diana Rebolledo, *Women Singing in the Snow: A Cultural Analysis of Chicana Literature* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 194. For a discussion of the resources that la Llorona offers to develop decolonizing subjectivities through witnessing, see Emma Velez, "Women in Philosophy: Why the Decolonial Imaginary Matters for Women in Philosophy," *Blog of the American Philosophical Association* (blog), January 16, 2019, https://blog.apaonline.org/2019/01/16/women-in-philosophy-why-the-decolonial-imaginary-matters-for-women-in-philosophy/.
20. See José Limón, "La Llorona, The Third Legend of Greater Mexico: Cultural Symbols, Women, and the Political Unconscious," in *Between Borders: Essays on Mexicana/Chicana History*, ed. Adelaoda R. Del Castillo (Encino, Calif.: Floricanto Press); Rebolledo, *Women Singing in the Snow;* Cordelia Candelaria, "Letting La Llorona Go," in *Literatura Chicana, 1965–1995: An Anthology in Spanish, English, and Caló*, ed. Manuel de Jesús Hernández-Guitérrez and David William Foster (New York: Garlan, 1997).
21. Domino Renee Perez, "Words, Worlds in Our Heads: Reclaiming La Llorona's Aztecan Antecedents in Gloria Anzaldúa's 'My Black Angelos,'" *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 15, nos. 3–4 (Fall 2003–Winter 2004): 52.

22. Anzaldúa, "My Black *Angelos*," 206.
23. Anzaldúa, "My Black *Angelos*," 206.
24. Perez, "Words, Worlds in Our Heads," 57.
25. María del Rosario Acosta López, "Memory and Fragility: Art's Resistance to Oblivion (Three Colombian Cases)," *The New Centennial Review* 14, no. 1 (2014): 78.
26. Al-Saji, "Touching the Wounds of Colonial Duration," 8.
27. Mariana Ortega, "Spectral Perception and Ghostly Subjectivity at the Colonial Gender/Race/Sex Nexus," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 77, no. 4 (Fall 2019): 402.
28. Ortega, "Spectral Perception and Ghostly Subjectivity," 407.
29. Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), xvi.
30. Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power: Eurocentrism and Latin America," *International Sociology* 15, no. 2 (2000): 221.
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