

**MUJERES Y MADNESS:
DECONSTRUCTING CHICANA TEORIA ON LOCURA,
QUEERNESS, AND LOVE**

Brenda Lara
University of California, Santa Cruz

BRENDA SELENA LARA (she/they/ella) is a UC President's Postdoctoral Fellow at UC Santa Cruz's Literature Department. She received her doctoral degree from UCLA's Cesar Chavez Department of Chicana/o and Central American Studies in 2023. Born and raised in Huntington Park, CA, Brenda is the first in her family to earn a PhD. Her research intersects haunting and Chicana Feminism to analyze LGBTQ+ Latinxs scholars' lives, knowledge, and deaths. She has published in *Queer Cats: A Journal of LGBTQ Studies* and has a chapter forthcoming in *Monsters and Saints: LatIndigenous Landscapes and Spectral Storytelling*.

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ABSTRACT

In "Mujeres y Madness: Deconstructing Chicana Teoría on Locura, Queerness, and Love," I explore the intersections of Chicanidad, queerness, and mental health as I navigate *locura* as a "typology in Borderlands." Drawing from queer Chicana feminist theorists, including Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherrie Moraga, and Alicia Gaspar de Alba, I explicate *locura teoría* within Chicana scholarship. Embracing my *locura*, my obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and the journey through madness and sanity, this essay traces my Coactlicue State. Utilizing Anzaldúa's literature and archives as a backdrop to my mental health, I analyze *locura*, sanity, and love within Anzaldúa's writing and my journal entries during the 2020-2021 phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through my mental destruction and reconstruction, I accept OCD as the *locura* and neurodivergent Shadow-Beast inside my mind.

KEYWORDS: Coatlicue State, Locura, Chicana Feminism, Queerness, Mental Health, Madness.

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1. INTRODUCTION: ENCONTRANDO LA LOCA

On October 26th, 2019, the University of California, Los Angeles' LGBTQ Studies Department hosted its annual Queer Graduate Student Conference (QGrad). As a conference organizer, 2019's theme, "Alter Net Bodies: Fat/Crip/Queered Identities, Expressions, and Cyber Activism," helped me reevaluate my inherent ableism and reform my identity as a person living with mental health concerns. Inspired by the keynote speaker, Gender and Disabilities Studies scholar Shayda Kafai's talk about her research and experiential knowledge on manic-depression, during the conference's closing remarks, I outed myself as a bisexual Chicana living with suicidal ideation. But it was not my sexuality that I feared. QGrad was a safe space in that regard. It was the word "suicide" that I feared. There is a collective *susto* that stigmatizes conversations about mental health, especially when thoughts of death are at the center of that conversation. As a result, I feared having an "Alter Net" body and mind. I feared being a *loca*. This *susto* did not go away; instead, it lurked slowly in the shadows. At the start of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, I faced my *susto* and *locura* at their most vicious intensity. *Locura* would engulf me and numb me as I was finally accurately diagnosed with obsessive-

compulsive disorder (OCD) after entering a mentally and physically debilitating state. Obsessive-compulsive disorder is a neurodivergent, common, and chronic disorder that leads individuals to have uncontrollable and reoccurring thoughts and behaviors (NIH 2022).

While OCD is often associated with cleanliness and order, my intrusive thoughts center on chaos, concern, and death. These taboo topics are vital to human existence yet suppressed to society's margins. With my OCD, I did the same; I attempted to lock it away like a Shadow Beast until it was angry, uncontrollable, and destructive. Embracing my *locura*, my OCD, and the journey through so-called madness and sanity meant facing what Chicana lesbian feminist theorist Gloria Anzaldúa names the Coactlicue State. Through my mental destruction and reconstruction, I accepted OCD as the neurodivergent Shadow Beast inside my mind. In this essay, I explore several questions on Chicanidad, queerness, and sanity as I navigate *locura* as a "typology in Borderlands" (Gloria Anzaldúa Papers Box 75 Folder 75-21). Motivated by Kafai's experiential scholarship and Anzaldúa's steps to Mestiza Consciousness, I explore my phenomenological journey as a queer individual surviving life with obsessive-compulsive disorder. What does it look like to be a queer Chicana with obsessive-compulsive disorder? What does it mean to enact *locura* in my everyday life? Is embracing *locura* love or hate? How are sanity and *susto* connected?

2. LOCA, SANE, AND QUEER

Sanity's etymology relates closely to Eurocentric Enlightenment that firmly established knowledge and intellect's relationship to logic and objectivity. As a result, the words' sanity and sane's etymological origins come from the 1700s Latin term "sanus" as "rational" and "correct" (etymonline.com 2022). Sanity's definition reaffirms a binary and a border when discussing mental health and mentality in general. A sane individual is correct; consequently, an insane individual is wrong. The word insane's etymology reaffirms the border between sanity and insanity as the 1550s Latin "insanus" means to be "mentally damaged" and "of unsound mind" (etymonline.com 2022). Madness' late 14th-century Old English etymology also draws from logic as "rash or irrational conduct;" it highlights the inability to behave in a logical form (etymonline.com 2022). But

madness also makes early references to a medical model of mentality with its definition of "dementia" (etymonline.com 2022). Though rationality and logic may seem reflective of objectivity, the terms madness and insane's other etymological roots diminish objectivity's involvement in sanity. References to personality and behavior reveal the subjective nature of madness and insanity as categorizations. For instance, insane's etymology also includes the descriptors "outrageous, excessive, extravagant," and the term madness draws its etymological roots from the phrase "headstrong passion" (etymonline.com 2022).

These etymologies expose the subjectivity in mental health categorizations and also show queerness' connection to madness and insanity. By the 1500s, queer was used to refer to something or someone who was "strange, peculiar, odd, eccentric," or "appearing, feeling, or behaving otherwise than is usual or normal." Queerness, like madness and insanity, describes individuals who do not adhere to hegemonic standards, including heterosexual norms. The *American Psychiatric Association's* normative use of homosexuality as a mental illness demonized the LGBTQ+ community by codifying and differentiating "natural" or "healthy" behavior from "unnatural," meaning "unhealthy" behavior." (Uyeda 2021). Unhealthy behavior could mean "strange" or "peculiar," subjective classifications that marginalize racialized, gendered, and sexed bodies. Furthermore, to be insane, also meant that you were, "outrageous, excessive, extravagant." These descriptors' dangers, alongside those of madness' etymology, replicate stereotypes against Chicax and queer communities. Here I utilize the letter x in the term Chicax to include Chicanas, Chicanos, and the array of queer, gendered, and non-binary identities that inhabit the politically aware Mexican-American community. Dominant powers have long generalized Chicax and queer individuals as loud, excessive, and exotic. For instance, categories such as the Spicy Latina and the Sassy Gay Best Friend show that Chicaxs and LGBTQ+ members are othered and marginalized as eccentric and extravagant. Within these parameters, LGBTQ+ Chicax communities are differentiated racially and sexually, excluded from intellect and sanity, yet relegated to liminality in the United States.

Moving away from Eurocentric etymologies helps reframe madness, precisely *locura's* boundaries. Though Latin and Old

English etymologies negatively denote insanity with a binary, definitions of the term *loca* in Indigenous Mexican and South Asian languages like Nahuatl, Sanskrit, and Hindi center on *loca's* fluidity and interchangeability. Within the Hindi language, the word "*loca*" means flexibility and tenderness (Wisdom Library 2021). Flexibility contrasts with static borders, highlighting the ability to move between boundaries. The term tenderness also transcends a basis on a mentality that centers objectivity. Instead, it reminds individuals that *locura* is a bodily construct. Tenderness is a sensation in the flesh. In the groundbreaking anthology *This Bridge Called My Back*, Chicana lesbian feminist theorist Cherrie Moraga notes the significance of the body in "theories of the flesh" as knowledge cannot be separate from our bodily existence (xix). Tenderness also connects *loca* to its Sanskrit definition "tears" (Wisdom Library 2021). Tears are multifaceted, as they can mean a rip, a wound, or weeping. When the flesh is tender, a rip or wound can cause tenderness, and vice versa; tender flesh will easily rip and wound. Additionally, while a physical tear can cause weeping, a tear such as crying can indicate tenderness in affect. The Nahuatl word "*Popoloca*" also focuses on transformation and physical change. While *Popoloca* refers to Otomanguan languages spoken in what is now the state of Puebla in the nation-state of Mexico, its etymology connects it to the "sound of a thick liquid (like gruel) bubbling and popping when it boils" (SIL International Mexico 2022). *Popoloca's* etymology focuses on other bodily sensations, including sound and vision. For instance, lava enacts *popoloca's* transformative qualities as a deadly and dangerous entity that also creates land and life. Lava's visualization shows *popoloca's* boiling through its bubbles. Popping is a distinct sound that demonstrates a change in temperature and matter, as the sound cannot be heard unless liquids begin to boil, an in-between state, before becoming a distinct entity from the same matter. *Popoloca* shows transformation through matter but also through an earthly and bodily connection.

Transformation, fluidity, and in-betweenness are necessary to re-envisioning *locura's* significance. Drawing from Gloria Anzaldúa's *Mestiza Consciousness*, Shayda Kafia terms the theory "mad-border body" to intersect queerness with the in-betweenness present in madness. Kafia asserts.

A mad border body exists in-between the fixed definitions of sanity and madness; this body is a dual inhabitant. I believe the mad border body reminds us, just as the mestiza and queer border body do, that identity categories are not given but constructed; identities are created in the act of edging, in the in-between living that dominant culture often scrutinizes and assumes invisible. Just as the queer border body demands we reinvestigate the contradistinctions between men and women, heterosexuality and homosexuality, the mad border body demands a similar deconstruction between the categories of sanity and madness.

The mad-border body emphasizes the worldly connection to identity and flesh. The clashing between identities and cultures is prevalent in the mad-border body theory, as Kafia establishes that it is necessary to understand the confrontation between sanity and madness. Yet, it is significant that she does not isolate this confrontation as a binary, focusing on its connection to other borderlands, including queerness and mestizaje, as well as those concepts' creations among larger societal boundaries. The mad-border body names madness as an everchanging identity, establishing that mental health is not just in the mind but instead forming through a connected and mutable mind and body.

3. LOCURA TEORIAS

Chicana literature and *teoría* on *locura* also emphasize the tension and clashes between the mind, the body, and the spirit. As Shayda Kafai's mad-border body theory acknowledges multifaceted identities, Chicana theories on *locura* demonstrate these identities' connections to the external world, including ancestral histories and the borderlands' violence. *Locura's* complexity is at the forefront of Chicana feminist and queer theory as Chicana scholars such as Cherrie Moraga, Gloria Anzaldúa, Olivia Castellano, and Alicia Gaspar de Alba discuss *locas* and *locura* within distinct historical, folkloric, transnational, and intellectual experiences.

Cherrie Moraga establishes *locura's* relationship to mythological Mixtec and Mexican icons in her play "The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea." Moraga recreates the Greek myths of Medea into a queer Indigenous and Chicana tragedy. Moraga's Medea asserts

in the play, "I discovered the mutilated women of our indigenous American history of story: La Llorona, Coyolxauhqui, Coatlicue. I worship them in my attempt to portray them in all their locura." (2001a, x). For Cherrie Moraga, *locura* is a way of being rooted in Indigeneity and a positive existence worth worshipping and replicating. Within "The Hungry Woman" Moraga classifies "La Llorona," the Weeping Woman, Coyolxauhqui, the Aztec moon goddess, and Coatlicue, the Aztec serpent goddess, as *locas* and "mutilated women." So, while the *locura* is an existence that Medea wants to depict, it also acknowledges violence against Indigenous and Chicana women. At least for these three figures, *locura* interrelates to the physical bodies' destruction.

Gloria Anzaldúa's *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro* also reflects upon sanity and its instability within heteropatriarchal societies, particularly the struggles and emotions Chicanas experience that fluctuate their capacity. Sanity is not a fixed, unmoving mental force. Instead, as the Hindi definition of *loca* asserts, it is flexible. Within *Light in the Dark*, Anzaldúa highlights sanity's gravity as she exclaims it is "a matter of life and death" (2). Within the piece, she explains that sanity and wholeness are essential to one another--it is a dialectical space where sanity and insanity inhabit the in-between space of being. Anzaldúa contemplates.

Dealing with the lack of cohesiveness and stability in life, that increasing tension and conflicts, motivates me to process the struggle. The sheer mental, emotional, and spiritual anguish motivates me to "write out" my/our experiences. More than that, my aspiration toward wholeness maintains my sanity, a matter of life and death (2).

Anzaldúa relates sanity to wholeness and connects it with her "mental, emotional, and spiritual anguish." As a result, for Anzaldúa, sanity is not mutually exclusive from negative affect. Instead to keep her wholeness, or her entire being, she maintains her sanity through voicing and deconstructing anguish and her spiritual dismemberment. Specifically, for Anzaldúa, processing her struggle and the borderlands involves writing, which further connects Anzaldúa to madness. A way of being that connects madness to its etymological roots as a "headstrong passion." Alongside *Light in the Dark*, Gloria Anzaldúa affirms a written and verbalized *locura* language. In "Speaking in

Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers," she exclaims that Chicanas "speak in tongues like the outcast and the insane" (Anzaldúa 26). As a lesbian Chicana, she equates herself to "the outcast" and "the insane." Her queerness highlights her sexual deviance in a heteropatriarchal society; she is insane because her sexuality is classified as unnatural and irrational. Outcast's 14th-century etymology furthers her claims about her sexual deviance because, as a lesbian Chicana, she is an "exile" in society and she is "socially despised" for her racial, gendered, sexualized, and bodily differences (etymonline.com 2022).

The psychological impact of white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and *machismo* on Chicanas' mentality and *locura* language is apparent in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) and Chicana scholar Olivia Castellano's essay "Canto, locura, y poesia." Anzaldúa expresses that she equated her creativity to madness. In reference to utilizing her creativity to foster her theories, she asserts, "I used to think I was going crazy or that I was having hallucinations" (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 91). Unlike Cherrie Moraga's contemplations on *locura*, Anzaldúa's writings reveal her initial rejection of *locura*, yet these writings would help her develop her *locura teoria*. Like Anzaldúa's claims that villainize *locura*, Olivia Castellano's essay establishes her mother's use of the word *loca* to deter her intellectual pursuits. Castellano recalls that her mother would warn her, "Te vas a volver loca con esos jodidos libros" (Castellano 19). As a young Chicana fascinated with reading, my *mamá* would also tell me that reading books "te puede volver loca." Still, for my Catholic mother, ironically, the Christian Bible would lead individuals to insanity. In a way, she was right, though her claims demonstrated the Catholic Church's misogynist power relations that saw priests as sole readers, interpreters, and preachers of so-called holy texts. Castellano's mother, like my mother and many other Latina mothers, utilize the word *loca* to describe behaviors and people they disagree with. However, Castellano affirms that her mother did not understand that Chicanas needed a bit of *locura* to "survive the madness that surrounds us" (19). Like Anzaldúa's need to process struggle in writing to establish her sanity, Castellano asserts that even if her mother considers reading *locura*, it is a transformation and headstrong passion that allows her to survive actual madness in her external world.

Castellano's claims about the world's madness show how being categorized as a *loca* can be a dangerous act. Latina novelist Yxta Maya Murray's "La Llorona: A Story" reframes *locura* to show the abuse La Llorona endured at the hands of her *machista* husband. Maya Murray states, "To think of all the things that will happen to you, that you will let others do to you, it is madness" (24-7). Murray connects a Chicana's *locura* with the violence she faces. Shifting madness away from Chicana's mentality, Murray, like Castellano, emphasizes the world's violence and madness. Chicana lesbian feminist cultural theorist Alicia Gaspar de Alba examines *Mexicanas* working in Juárez's *maquiladoras* (factories) in *Making a Killing: Femicide, Free Trade and La Frontera*. Of the women known colloquially as "maqui-locas," Gaspar de Alba explains that they are seen as maquiladora workers by day and working girls at night because they go out with whomever they want and dress like their counterparts north of the border. Within heteropatriarchy's boundaries, "Maqui-Locas [are] women who think they're independent because they work at the maquila, when all they are is so far from God, so close to the United States" (Gaspar de Alba 156). Capitalism and heteropatriarchy reduce these factory workers to exploited bodies, they live in liminality, in between the sexual and economic exploitation of two nations. Gaspar de Alba references Christian values that categorize maqui-locas in the promiscuous category of La Tres Marias Syndrome (158). Under *machismo*, maqui-locas are negatively sexually labeled because they are not married, work, and many use birth control (Gaspar de Alba 160). The Mary Magdalene categorization in La Tres Marias Syndrome — the prostitute— deems these women *locas* and consequently places their lives at death's door. The "maqui" part of "maqui-locas" has two meanings. It is the maquiladora, or factory, the girls work in, but it also shows that men treat these women like objects (Gaspar de Alba 160), like cogs in a machine. *Mexicanos* classify them as *locas* to weaponize their sexuality as promiscuous behavior. Yet, like Castellano, the maqui-locas attempt to survive in an immoral and mad environment where men do not value women's humanity. As "maqui-locas," these women take on a fem-bot state. For the patriarchy, "maqui-locas" are part of the factory assembly line; they are replaceable parts of machines whose sole value is their ability to

produce goods for sale; they quickly get used up and disposed of like corporate trash. The word *maquila* has its roots in the word *molido*, meaning ground (Gaspar de Alba 164). Considering the etymology of the term *maquila*, the "maqui-locas" are ground up. The sexual violence and femicide of these women show the connection between the Juarez women and machines. Femicide is a "misogynist ritual" (Gaspar de Alba 171). Rituals are events or actions that repeat. Murder becomes femicide through its repetition. It is easy for men committing femicide to grind "maqui-locas" until they are literally in the ground. Since the heteropatriarchal individuals and structures classify them as *locas*, *locura* reverts the "maqui-locas" to unhealthy irrational beings. Unfortunately, the maqui-locas' *locura* is only known because they are dead (Gaspar de Alba 135).

4. LOVE DURING PSYCHOLOGICAL SUFFERING

Suffering in *locura* is a bodily and psychological sensation that can transcend through individuals with love. In Latina feminist theologian Nancy Pineda-Madrid's *Suffering + Salvation in Ciudad Juarez*, she articulates that while women endure suffering from the loss of loved ones in the Juarez femicides, they also engage in love (125). The concept of suffering is crucial to deconstructing Disability Studies. Anzaldúa's notes on Disability Studies (shown in Figure 2) demonstrate that disability is a "typology in Borderlands" (Anzaldúa, Papers Box 75 Folder 75-21). To contemplate suffering and disability, it is significant to deconstruct the symbols and interpretations present in the borderlands. Both literal and metaphorical borderlands establish a place's relationship to an individual's intersectionality. For a person with a mental or physical disability, like Gloria Anzaldúa, navigating ableist borderlands involves being aware of interpretations and symbols present in the space. Suffering and love are a part of that landscape because the borderlands influence suffering's severity, occurrence, and presence. But as Chela Sandoval reminds Chicanas in *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000), love is a decolonial tactic that punctures just as intensely as trauma (145).

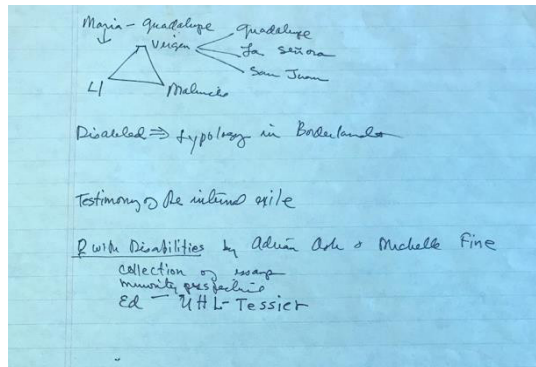


Figure 1 Notes on Disability from "Gloria Evangelia Anzaldúa Papers" Box 75.

In the Summer of 2019, I traveled to Texas to examine Chicana lesbian feminist theorist Gloria Anzaldúa's University of Texas-Austin's "Gloria Evangelia Anzaldúa Papers." During my archival research, I felt an overwhelming sense of sadness, rage, desperation, and care while reviewing Anzaldúa's notes written months before her death on May 15th, 2004. Embodying Pineda-Madrid's theory on suffering and love, Anzaldúa's testimonios moved me. Having read *Borderlands* as a rebellious fifteen-year-old teenager, I felt Anzaldúa's words in my soul. Years later, as a woman in my twenties, I would feel that same sentiment, chills, and heaviness surrounding my body after reading a scrap of blue paper (Figure 1). I felt love for Anzaldúa, and I felt her suffering. Gloria Anzaldúa wrote, "I turned to psychotherapy not religion, not politics to feed my mind & body & to feed my spirit & turned to the occult, the mystical, the psychic. Suffering is not just the result of a fucked-up consciousness" (Anzaldúa, Papers Box 75). Within this piece of paper, Anzaldúa theorizes two significant aspects of locura. In the first sentence, she removes mental health from dominant structures like religion and politics; instead, she emphasizes psychotherapy and supernatural rituals. Psychotherapy involves change; Anzaldúa explicitly says that she needed therapy to cultivate her mind, body, and spirit. Just as in *Light in the Dark*, she draws from intellectual processes and development to engage her wholeness and contemplate her psychological state.

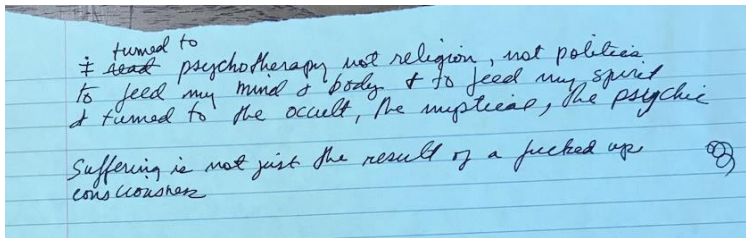


Figure 2 A Note on Suffering from "Gloria Evangelia Anzaldúa Papers" Box 75.

Her second sentence shifts her theories on mental health toward suffering. On the blue note, she continues, "Suffering is not just the result of a fucked up consciousness" (Anzaldúa, Papers Box 75 Folder 75-21). Embodying *locura* is not tranquil or painless; to live includes experiencing the Coatlicue state. External societal issues influence Anzaldúa's Coatlicue state. As the fourth stage in Mestiza Consciousness, the Coatlicue state draws from Mexica mythology. Coatlicue is the earth goddess, represented by serpents and her duality as life and death (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 68-9). Like the term *loca*'s non-Eurocentric etymologies, which emphasize fluidity and change, the Coatlicue state is a transformative process that forces individuals to know, and "knowing is a painful state," consequently, it is a petrifying psychological state that disrupts life (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 68-9). In United States society, suffering is often individualized as one person's concern; Anzaldúa's note critiques this perception to allude to the societal issues of suffering. Suffering is not just an individual struggle but a collective and institutional injustice. Anzaldúa is no exception. Alongside this note, her December 4th, 2001, diabetes tracking log entry reveals her suffering as a psychological state as Anzaldúa declares within the page's margins, "why am I punishing myself" (Anzaldúa, Papers Box 3 Folder 7). Yet, as her blue note establishes, suffering is not solely an internalized state but a structural issue. In a 1997 letter to Jeanie Sharpe, Anzaldúa confesses how the medical industry's financial and structural issues have overwhelmed her with debt as she owes \$9,000 in medical expenses. She elaborates that her total living expenses add up to \$72,461.13 (Anzaldúa, Papers Box 3 Folder 3-4). Anzaldúa's financial instability allows her to theorize about suffering through her socioeconomic experiences. Her journey into the

Coatlicue state incapacitates her because the external world enacts violent disruptions.

A few months into the pandemic, I began documenting my Coatlicue State. These are *desahogos* or moments of venting and relief. My short phenomenological accounts momentarily helped me release myself from suffering; more significantly, they allowed me to shed my serpent skin and deconstruct my OCD. On September 20th, 2020, I unconsciously replicated Anzaldúa's theories as I wrote, "It's the psychology in my head that haunts me, tattered, tired and torn. Are others born with self-destructing minds?" Not knowing what else to name this feeling, I called it head haunting. The head haunting was another term for the physical and mental suffering I felt inside my mind. I labeled my *locura* a self-destructive mind and associated my OCD diagnosis with Sanskrit's *loca* because I felt "torn." Like Anzaldúa, my Coatlicue state was a form of individual and collective suffering. I was torn by the misfiring occurring inside my brain, but I was also torn from love. I was stripped away from self-love and my loved ones. Amid the pandemic, my estranged father became critically ill, my mother was diagnosed with stomach cancer, my younger brother was in a car accident, and I was home trying to manage my *locura* alongside my doctoral exams. OCD, as the intrusive Shadow Beast that it was, filled my head with worst-case scenarios; I was convinced my very existence would cause my loved ones' deaths. Fortunately, none of these thoughts came true. My OCD fed on my love for my family, but as Pineda-Madrid affirms, after my suffering also came love. As a bisexual Chicana, I was no stranger to coming out; coming out as neurodivergent was a strenuous process, but love in its murky complexity guided me through the journey.

5. SUICIDE & SUSTO

Shadows lurk in the darkness. Suicidal ideation's proximity to death creates a *susto*. At the 2022 *El Mundo Zurdo: Society for the Study of Gloria Anzaldúa* conference, I presented on a panel with Philosopher Mariana Alessandri. We both revealed glimpses into Anzaldúa's life and death; I presented on Gloria Anzaldúa's La Llorona ontology as acceptance of death, and Alessandri on her book *Night Vision*

analyzing Anzaldúa's depression as a mental disorder and spiritual disruption. During the question-and-answer portion, we were asked how to ethically theorize mental health in controversial deaths such as suicide. Having written a dissertation chapter on Chicana literary theorist Lora Romero's suicide, it was a question that I had pondered upon and continue to contemplate now. The panel speculated whether suicide was a last act of autonomy and possibly a way to escape the body to free the spirit. While we still do not have answers to this question, we did come together to theorize *susto* as more than just fear. Rethinking anxiety and depression, *susto* was a way this small panel rethought mental health as a collective phenomenon. We came to define *susto* as a cultural belief that emphasizes the feeling of shock and fright. As part of the Coatlicue state, *susto* demonstrates how shadows, darkness, and *locura* are part of a communal experience.

Gloria Anzaldúa's unpublished short story "Suicide" also depicts the affective stress of *locura*, mainly focusing on the mind-body split. In this manuscript, Anzaldúa describes overdosing and dying (Anzaldúa, Papers Box 73 Folder 73-11). During her death, she had an out-of-body experience. In the out-of-body experience, her spirit feels the corporeal world as if she had a physical body, stating that as she floats outside her body, she bumps her head on a hot lightbulb on the ceiling (Anzaldúa, Papers Box 73 Folder 73-11). "Suicide" articulates the discomfort related to the mind-body split. In the short story, the separation is quite literal. She becomes a spirit no longer attached to a corporeal body. In this state, Gloria articulates that she had a "horrible fear" that she would not return to her body (Anzaldúa, Papers Box 73 Folder 73-11). However, this *susto* is temporally subdued by another being, as her friend wakes her up and accuses Gloria of committing suicide because she should have known better than to mix drugs (Anzaldúa, Papers Box 73 Folder 73-11). As she awakes, her spirit returns to her body. But when she wakes up, she is still haunted by discomfort as she asserts that the "body doesn't forget" (Anzaldúa, Papers Box 73 Folder 73-11). Although "Suicide" articulates a horrific experience, it also demonstrates how the body and spirit are conscious and unconscious of one another. Though she is no longer in an out-of-body experience, Gloria Anzaldúa is left with the negative emotions revolving around their separation. Anzaldúa's being depends on her body and spirit to the point that her trauma

leads to a mind-body split, and she is left unsettled by not having a body.

On September 10th, 2020, I also felt a *susto*, but instead of fearing the mind-body split, I feared that my mind would fully take over my body, causing chaos. I reflected on the negativity in my mind that night as I wrote,

I sit in the corner of lost and forgotten. Where I've lost my will to live and forgotten my purpose in life. Where the melodies that played in my heart have lost their tunes and the shivers I feel at night extend throughout my whole body. So, I live on the corner of lost and forgotten. Where I've lost my sense of self and forgotten the taste of happiness. Where the smiles that formed on my face can no longer locate the corners of my mouth and the warm feeling of embrace no longer lingers. And I lay on the corner of lost and forgotten. Where I lose a bit of sanity and sway through forgotten thoughts. Where I've sworn my days and I hope to escape.

I place my sanity and *locura* in relation to society, my body, and bodily sensations. The state of loss and the fear of being forgotten transform how I perceive the world and how my body reacts to my surroundings. My bodily and emotional transformation is shown through a loss of internalized music, an overstimulation of shivers, a loss of taste, the inability to form a smile, and feel the outside environment. My OCD jumps through logic's steps; my brain does not process life linearly, so I do not think linearly. The fluidity within the steps of Mestiza Consciousness is not only metaphorically fluid and interchangeable; it is part of my body's anatomy. For my Shadow-Beast, escaping life is the quickest solution.

During my Coatlicue State, I feared my internalized home—my body and mind. *Borderlands' teorías*, like the "fear of going home," demonstrate White heteropatriarchal hegemony's affective consequences and the persecution of marginalized individuals. Gloria Anzaldúa terms the "fear of going home" as the terror associated with experiencing homophobia in your family (*Borderlands* 41). Anzaldúa, alongside a collective of third-world feminists, created the anthology *This Bridge Called My Back* to create an intellectual space, a third-world feminist collective that unleashes the Shadow-Beast's resistance. In describing the fear of going home, Gloria Anzaldúa's

second chapter in *Borderlands*, "Movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan," articulates the Shadow-Beast, stating,

To avoid rejection, some of us conform to the values of the culture, push the unacceptable parts into the shadows. Which leaves only one fear—that we will be found out and the Shadow-Beast will break out of its cage. Some of us take another route. We try to make ourselves conscious of the Shadow-Beast, stare at the sexual lust and lust for power and deconstruction we see on its face, discern among its features the undershadow that the reigning order of heterosexual male project on our Beast. Yet still others of us take it another step: we try to waken the Shadow-Beast inside us (42).

The Shadow-Beast has a dialectical essence; it is first the undesirable entity you imprison. As the "unacceptable parts in the shadows," this entity represents the parts of an individual's intersectionality that conservative society demeans. In the above quote, Anzaldúa utilizes the Shadow-Beast to signify lesbianism and queerness. Yet, as Anzaldúa demonstrates, this imprisonment is part of a "heterosexual male project" that desires to disappear queerness and LGBTQ+ bodies; heteropatriarchy creates negative perceptions of the beast. At the same, the Shadow-Beast acts as an embodiment of resistance as Anzaldúa shows that at its simplest form, the Shadow-Beast represents the awareness that structures of power against women and queer individuals exist. In other words, a total acceptance of the Shadow-Beast is an acceptance of an individual's internalized marginalized identities within dominant power structures. When an individual sleeps, their bodies are still not fully active, and the mind's perceptions are pointed inward without communicating to the outside physical world; in this way, sleep literally and metaphorically cages the body. To awaken the beast, as the 21st-century colloquial phrase "woke" demonstrates, is to exist in resistant consciousness. An awake Shadow-Beast is an internally and externally free and active Shadow-Beast.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, my Shadow-Beast had released herself, but I still tried to suppress her. As a result, I was not healing nor relearning how I envisioned my mentality. *Locura* here was not a transformation for the better; it was a *susto* that I was not normal. On December 11th, 2020, I wrote about my Shadow Beast, personifying her,

I saw her at the corner of my eye. Dark, long, tangled, fair, pale face, tired eyes. And she told me to stay. I wanted to move. But I listened. She touched me and I felt paralyzed with fear. I guess she was a little scared too. I guess she meant the best. But she trapped me. I wanted to move. Go outside. Breathe some fresh air. But she told me no. And I listened. And I kept on listening. Every day she moved closer. At first, I saw her at the corner of my eye. Later she felt confident enough to sit on my bedside table. She used to be quiet. I didn't recognize her at first. But our lives had crossed years ago. I didn't know she had been watching me since. I suspected, but I told myself it was just me. I was just a little sad, a little tired, a little crazy.

The woman with the "Dark, long, tangled, fair, pale face, tired eyes" was not just my Shadow-Beast; it was who I had become. During exposure therapy treatment, I was told I had to face what scared me. For me, the voice in my head felt it much easier to ponder the most improbable horrific scenarios. A few months later, I confronted her again on June 18th, 2021,

And she felt the sadness in her eyes, the pressure of life on her chest and it became hard to breathe but she did. With dread in her heart, she put a blank expression on her face and that was enough. Enough to get her through the moment. "I wonder if others have such a difficult life" she thought to herself. "I wonder if others get scared of calm." She held her breath, hoping her chest would stop absorbing the world's burdens. Or at least just hers. She was wrong.

Gloria highlights the Shadow-Beast's ontological significance in her essay, "Let us be the healing of the wound." Referring to societal shadows that must be exposed, Anzaldúa asserts, "My job as an artist is to bear witness to what haunts us, to step back and attempt to see the pattern in these events (personal and societal), and how we can repair el daño (the damage) by using the imagination and its visions" (Let us be the healing 304). In the quote, Anzaldúa acknowledges that personal and societal hauntings exist as damage and that artistry should heal this damage. While my June 18th entry reconnects me to my Shadow- Beast, it also acknowledges that the beast exists as part of me and will not disappear. Anzaldúa continues by stating, "En estos tiempos de La Llorona, we must use creativity to jolt us into

awareness of our spiritual/political problems and other major global tragedies so we can repair el daño" (Anzaldúa, Let us be the healing 312). My entry is creativity trying to heal *el daño en mi mente*.

6. DISABILITY, LOCURA, AND THE QUEER CHICANA BODY & MIND

As a lesbian Chicana living with diabetes, Anzaldúa lives at the bodily intersections of life and death. As a queer Chicana living with obsessive-compulsive disorder, I live between life and death in my mind. Sociologist Avery Gordon's concept of "the living dead," as a living individual who haunts with "their liminality and in their ability to cross between the worlds of the living and the dead," describes Anzaldúa's existence (Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 69). Liminality occurs at all stages of an individual's intersectionality, including at different spectrums of disability and capability. In "Disability and Identity: An Email Exchange and a Few Additional Thoughts," AnaLouise Keating asks Anzaldúa about her role in Disability Studies. Gloria Anzaldúa takes several stances in this email exchange, including her refusal to identify as "disabled or as a diabetic," not to victimize herself, and to prioritize her Chicana lesbian identity. However, I take a distinct stance in identification, calling obsessive-compulsive disorder my OCD, to establish that my lived experience with neurodivergence differs because of my intersectionality and specific type of OCD diagnosis. Alongside her identification, she asserts that people with disabilities develop high sensitivity to "la facultad" or intuition. She claims, "I do believe that persons with disabilities are among those prone to develop la facultad. So, it follows that people with disabilities are more apt to become nepantleras" (Anzaldúa, *Disability and Identity* 300). Both la facultad and nepantleras as border crossers are theories that highlight skills and identities necessary to navigate disabilities' typology of the borderlands. Intuition and liminality are crucial to establishing a Llorona or Shadow-Beast ontology highlighting marginalized subjectivities in a hostile world. Gloria ends the email exchange "Diabetes and Identity" by emphasizing this Llorona ontology. Death and disability come together to process what health means to the self. Anzaldúa asserts, "We mourn (here is where La Llorona comes in) the loss of the "healthy," abled, integrated

self, a self we may never have possessed. I can never go back to the way things were before I lost my "health" or home or whatever" (Anzaldúa, *Disability and Identity* 302). Anzaldúa is a Llorona because she mourns herself and her imagined health. The process of mourning the self also brings about the Shadow-Beast's self-reflection in "The Postmodern Llorona. Through mourning, Anzaldúa experiences the Coatlicue state as she acknowledges the "loss of the 'healthy.'" Through this mourning, she is left in a transformative state that also critiques the construction of health. Health and diabetes become distinctive entities that attempt to penetrate Anzaldúa's identification. But by acknowledging "loss," she highlights her liminality and "confronts the face [Shadow-Beast] in the mirror." She learns that *locura* is present in life and death—a *locura* that is incredibly provoking because she dictated it in her life and after her passing.

I also mourn the loss of the façade of my neurotypical life. I mourned for the twenty-five years I was submerged in the façade of normality and my imagined health before creating a collective and balanced bond with the obsessive-compulsive disorder that had previously dragged me through the darkest crevices in my mind. I have mourned my normality before; at age twelve, I mourned the façade of heterosexuality; at age seventeen, I mourned the façade of racial and class equality, but I gained wholeness and love. My destruction and rebuilding made me once again love myself. Coatlicue, the serpent goddess, guided me to an uncontrollable Shadow-Beast that I did not need to control. OCD, *locura*, and Shadow-Beast are who I am and who I am becoming.

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