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## Sketching Spirit in Everything: Exploring Spirituality, Interconnectivity, and Creativity in Gloria Anzaldúa's Archived Drawings

Dibujando el Espíritu en Todo: Explorando la Espiritualidad, la Interconectividad y la Creatividad en los Dibujos Archivados de Gloria Anzaldúa

Sara Ishii<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup> PhD Texas Woman's University

@autor/a de correspondencia: sishii@twu.edu

### Resumen

Gloria Anzaldúa trazó importantes conexiones entre espiritualidad, interconectividad y creatividad cuando afirmó "la idea de que todo es espiritual, que soy una partícula de esta alma, esta conciencia creativa, esta fuerza de vida creativa; y también un perro, una piedra, un pájaro, esta colcha y esta pared... Todo es relativo, yo estoy relacionado con todo" (Interviews 2000). Al afirmar una relación universal entre todos los seres basada en la afinidad espiritual, Anzaldúa coloca la espiritualidad en el centro del trabajo de justicia social. Además, expande el alcance y las aplicaciones de la espiritualidad para incluir todas las formas de seres y desestabiliza la separación y jerarquía entre humanos y no humanos. En la introducción, establezco la articulación de la espiritualidad de Anzaldúa como orientada a la justicia social, inclusiva de todas las formas de ser y conectada a la creatividad. A continuación, examino tres de los bocetos archivados de animales y naturaleza de Anzaldúa y pongo estas imágenes en conversación con sus teorías escritas. Si bien el archivo contiene numerosos bocetos que incorporan un animal o la naturaleza, selecciono dibujos que contienen la naturaleza y al menos un animal representado en un estilo de patrones complejos. En mi análisis exploro las preguntas: ¿Cómo podemos leer los bocetos de Anzaldúa a través de sus escritos sobre espiritualidad? Y a la inversa, ¿qué podemos aprender sobre la teoría de la espiritualidad de Anzaldúa a partir de sus bocetos archivados? A través del análisis compositivo, analizo los usos de la imaginación de Anzaldúa para articular una espiritualidad que indica interconexiones entre los humanos y nuestro entorno. Para concluir, reflexiono sobre las contribuciones que hace la obra de arte de Anzaldúa en el desarrollo de su teoría de la espiritualidad que genera cambios personales y sociales. Sostengo que las disciplinas académicas dedicadas al análisis de los problemas sociales pueden beneficiarse del examen de las teorías tanto escritas como visuales de Anzaldúa porque presenta una espiritualidad que está profundamente enredada con las preocupaciones de los grupos marginados, no alejada de ellas.

**Palabras clave:** Gloria Anzaldúa, espiritualidad, creatividad, obra de arte.

### Abstract

Gloria Anzaldúa drew important connections between spirituality, interconnectivity, and creativity when she stated, "*the idea that everything is spiritual, that I'm a speck of this soul, this creative consciousness, this creative life force; and so is a dog, a rock, a bird, this bedspread, and this wall...Everything is relative, I'm related to everything*" (Interviews 2000). In asserting a universal relation between all beings based on spiritual affinity, Anzaldúa places spirituality at the core of social justice work. Furthermore, she expands the scope and applications of spirituality to includes all forms of beings and unsettles the separation and hierarchy between humans and nonhumans. In the introduction, I establish Anzaldúa's articulation of spirituality as social justice oriented, inclusive of all forms of being, and connected to creativity. Next, I examine three of Anzaldúa's archived sketches of animals and nature and place these images into conversation with her written theories. While the archive holds numerous sketches that incorporate an animal or nature, I select drawings that contain nature and at least one animal rendered in a complex patterning style. In my analysis I explore the questions: How can we read Anzaldúa's sketches through her writings on spirituality? And conversely, what can we learn about Anzaldúa's theory of spirituality from her archived sketches? Through compositional analysis, I unpack Anzaldúa uses of imagination to articulate a spirituality that indicates interconnections between humans and our environment. In conclusion, I reflect on the contributions Anzaldúa's artwork makes in developing her theory of spirituality that creates personal and social change. I argue that academic disciplines invested in analyzing social issues can benefit from examining both Anzaldúa's written and visual theories because she presents a spirituality that is deeply enmeshed with, not removed from, the concerns of marginalized groups.

**Key words:** Gloria Anzaldúa, spirituality, creativity, artwork.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Gloria Anzaldúa (2000) drew important connections between spirituality, interconnectivity, and creativity when she stated, *“the idea that everything is spiritual, that I’m a speck of this soul, this creative consciousness, this creative life force; and so is a dog, a rock, a bird, this bedspread, and this wall...Everything is my relative, I’m related to everything.”* In asserting a universal relation between all beings based on spiritual affinity, Anzaldúa places spirituality at the core of social justice work. If we are all connected, then harm to another person or group does harm to me. In addition to Anzaldúa’s concern for humans and related issues (e.g., racism, sexism, homophobia, and colonialism), her inclusion of a “dog,” “rock,” “bird,” “bedspread,” and “wall” expands the scope and applications of Anzaldúa’s spirituality to address issues concerning nonhumans. Her theory of spirituality includes all beings and unsettles the separation and hierarchy between different forms of being.<sup>1</sup>

Anzaldúa problematizes the way society discourages spiritual cultivation. She (2012) argues that society tells us *“[w]e’re not supposed to remember such otherworldly events. We’re supposed to ignore, forget, kill those fleeting images of the soul’s presence and of the spirit’s presence. We’ve been taught that the spirit is outside our bodies or above our heads somewhere up in the sky with God. We’re supposed to forget that every cell in our bodies, every bone and bird and worm has spirit in it.”* According to Anzaldúa, when we ignore our own connection to the spirit, we don’t locate the spirit in other beings. Instead, Anzaldúa offers us spirituality as a tool to transform oneself and society. As AnaLouise Keating (2000) notes, *“Gloria anchors her metaphysics in her deeply held desire for personal, social, and global transformation.”* Noting the disconnect between spirituality and social responsibility, Anzaldúa (2015) introduces the concept of “spiritual

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<sup>1</sup> There are multiple aspects to Anzaldúa’s concept of spirituality. While I focus in this paper on Anzaldúa’s relations between spirituality, interconnectivity, and creativity, I acknowledge Anzaldúa theorizes spirituality well beyond these boundaries to include concepts of embodiment, sexuality, and psychology. For example, Anzaldúa (2009) notes the connection between spirituality, sexuality, and embodiment meant that when one of these aspects is hindered, the other components are also impeded: *“One reason I kept spirituality down is because it was so connected to the sexual, to the physical. [...] When I started opening up to the body, the spiritual thing came out too because it really connected with the body and sexuality.”* In addition, Anzaldúa (2009) attributes her spiritual consciousness to a psychological awareness: *“A lot of my awareness of spirituality comes from the psyche, from the soul in a psychological point of view.”* For scholars discussing Anzaldúa’s concept of spirituality in relation to sexuality and embodiment, please see: Betsy Dahms’ (2013) *“Compulsory Heterosexuality in Gloria Anzaldúa’s ‘El Paisano is a Bird of Good Omen’;*” Robyn Henderson-Espinoza’s (2013) *“Gloria Anzaldúa’s El Mundo Zurdo: Exploring a Relational Feminist Theology of Interconnectedness;”* and Laura Pérez’s (2007) *Chicana Art: The Politics of Spiritual and Aesthetic Alterities.*

activism,” *“the activist stance that explores spirituality’s social implications ... that is engaged by a diverse group of people with different spiritual practices, or spiritual mestizaje.”* Anzaldúa’s spiritual activism calls us to locate commonalities across difference and collectively address social issues. As AnaLouise Keating (2008) notes, in her theory of spiritual activism, Anzaldúa *“embraces the apparent contradiction and insists that the spiritual/material, inner/outer, individual/collective dimensions of life are parts of a larger whole, joined in a complex, interwoven pattern.”* Anzaldúa’s theories offer us techniques for implementing spirituality in social justice work and her spiritual lens helps unsettle anthropocentric perspectives, or human-centered thinking, that secure human dominance.

In an interview with Linda Smuckler, Anzaldúa (2009) challenges the perceived binary between humans and animals stating, *“I’m concerned with why people differentiate animals from humans. To me we’re all related, even to the grass.”* In not acknowledging a relationship with animals and nature, humans maintain a sense of superiority over nonhumans, which can lend itself to the mistreatment of animals and the environment (e.g., animal cruelty, pollution, and the threat to plant and animal populations). Kelli Zaytoun (2015) remarks that Anzaldúa did not privilege the human subject, instead *“imagination and openness, what Anzaldúa identifies as a prerequisite for coalition work, requires a resistance to anthropocentrism, a rejection of the enclosed and elevated human subject.”* For Anzaldúa, animals and nature hold equal importance to the world’s wellbeing.<sup>2</sup>

Anzaldúa’s awareness of nonhumans links to other scholars’ work to reconfigure humans/nonhuman relations. Similar sentiments have been expressed by scholars of the “nonhuman turn,” an interdisciplinary trajectory inclusive of the humanities and social sciences, and philosophers of the “speculative turn,” both groups argue for the consideration of nonhuman beings in theoretical, ontological, and epistemological discussions. The re-examination of the nonhuman is significant given Brian Massumi’s (2002) critique that *“It is meaningless to interrogate the relation of the human to the nonhuman if the nonhuman is only a construct of human culture, or inertness.”* Said differently, discussions regarding nonhumans need to employ different perspectives that do not rely on hierarchies privileging the human. I posit that Anzaldúa enters this conversation from a unique angle because her view of nonhumans relies on spirituality and interconnectivity. According to Keating (2015), Anzaldúa asserts a non-anthropocentric lens in *Light in the Dark* that differs from object-oriented

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<sup>2</sup> AnaLouise Keating and Kimberly Merenda (2013) also observe that *“Anzaldúa is not posthuman; she neither denies nor discounts human beings and human life. Rather, she occupies the category (‘human being’) and transforms it from within.”*

philosophers who argue that objects are distinctly separate from all other forms of being. Instead, Keating (2015) notes that “Anzaldúa insists on the radical interrelatedness, independence, and sacredness of all existence.” As such, a focus on connectivity through spirituality could help to illustrate these connections.

Because Anzaldúa often evoked images to work through and communicate her theories, an examination of her archived drawings can shed new light on the role of animals and the environment in her theory of spirituality. She states (2009) “[w]hen I’m writing I sketch images in order to gather and organize my thinking. For me, this sketching is better than making outlines. An image is worth a thousand words because there is a cluster of meanings associated with each image, with each thing that I sketch.” Indeed, visual and written work can communicate ideas differently; therefore, an examination of Anzaldúa’s sketches can give us insight into how she uses visual art to explore concepts of spirituality.<sup>3</sup> Laura Pérez (2007) makes a similar observation noting that in

*Borderlands, images and written or spoken word are inseparably linked, as image and spoken word are in the functioning of the Mesoamerican glyph (pictograph/ideogram) ... From Anzaldúa’s perspective, writing is an image-making practice that can shape and transform what we imagine, are able to perceive, and are able to give material embodiment. Understood, therefore, is the great responsibility and sacredness of the very real and consequential ‘transformative power’ wielded by the image-makers, which literally ‘makes face, makes soul’ in a reading process understood to be part of a larger performance.*

Because few scholars have examined the relationship between her theories of spirituality and her sketches, I seek to help fill this gap in the literature by exploring the following questions: How can we read Anzaldúa’s sketches through her writings on spirituality? And conversely, what can we learn about Anzaldúa’s theory of spirituality from her archived sketches? Placing Anzaldúa’s artwork into conversation with her written theories, I analyze

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<sup>3</sup> While I make a distinction between visual and written texts, I acknowledge the close ties Anzaldúa draws between the visual and the literary. For example, please see Gloria Anzaldúa (2009) “Metaphors in the Tradition of the Shaman” in *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* and (2015) *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. For scholars discussing Anzaldúa’s link between the visual and literary, please see: AnaLousie Keating’s (2012) “Speculative Realism, Visionary Pragmatism, and Poet-Shamanic Aesthetics in Gloria Anzaldúa—and Beyond” and Stephanie Alvarez, Stephanie Brock, Janie Covarrubias, Lauren Espinoza, and Orquidea Morales’ (2013) “Gloria Anzaldúa, Nuestra Gloria, Nuestra Heroína Fronteriza / Our Glory(a), Our Borderlands Heroine: An Art Exhibit at Anzaldúa’s Alma Mater, The University of Texas—Pan American.”

how Anzaldúa uses the imagination to articulate a spirituality that develops relations between humans and our environment.

## 2. SKETCH SELECTION AND ANALYSIS

To explore Anzaldúa's articulation of spirituality, I have chosen three archived sketches that depict detailed representations of animals and nature. The Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers are located at the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Library at the University of Texas, Austin. The drawing titled *18 Mai 82* and one untitled sketch are located in the folders titled "Artwork – Artwork by Anzaldúa, various, N.D.," and the sketch titled *20 junio 87* is found in the folder titled "Sketchbook 1987-1990." While the archive holds numerous sketches that incorporate animals or nature, I have selected drawings that contain nature and at least one animal rendered in a complex patterning style. As such, the images relate to one another through subject, style, and technique, rather than by timeframe.

Below, I first describe the compositional of the drawings, then identify two common themes present within each drawing, 1) the vitality of all beings and 2) the interconnectivity between beings, which illuminate aspects of Anzaldúa's theory of spirituality. Anzaldúa (2012) posits that images link ideas when she states, "*[a]n image is a bridge between evoked emotion and conscious knowledge; words are the cables that hold up the bridge. Images are more direct, more immediate than words, and closer to the unconscious.*" In this project, I hope to demonstrate how Anzaldúa's sketches form bridges that allow us to relate her theories of spirituality, interconnectivity, and creativity. Placing Anzaldúa's animal and nature sketches into conversation with her written theories, I analyze how Anzaldúa articulates her theory of spirituality that develops relations between humans and our environment. In doing this work, I hope to demonstrate the multifaceted nature of Anzaldúa's theory of spirituality and its implications for viewing human and nonhuman life.

### 2.1. Sketch compositions

In the first drawing dated May 18, 1982, Anzaldúa interweaves ambiguous figures and organic shapes (Figure 1). Beginning on the left, looped lines pile together; some form links in a chain, while others spiral inwards to the composition's center. At the heart of the drawing reside bundles of lines and shapes in varying qualities, for example, straight thin lines mix with curved thick shapes. What appears to be various heads emerge from the top of the central detailed network. The left-most head is the most human-like in shape with two dark eyes. A line that runs down the face's center may indicate facial features such as the bridge of a nose and

lips; however, this line may also indicate there are not one but two heads facing each other in profile. Moving to the right, two non-human heads rise from the center. Both heads appear to be in profile; one contains a single eye and the other has hair-like lines sprouting from its forehead and an open beak. The last head in the top-right corner resembles a frog with a bulging eye and wide-hinged mouth. Short lines cover the frog's head and formless body that expands down to the center and across to the human profile head. At the bottom of the page, Anzaldúa includes what might be scheduling notes such as times (i.e., "12:00") and locations (i.e., "18th St & 7th Av" and "5th & 6th Av").



Figure 1. Gloria Anzaldúa, 18 Mai 82. Copyright © by the Gloria Anzaldúa Literary Trust. Benson Latin American Collection. University of Texas Libraries.

The second drawing is untitled, undated, and created on lined notebook paper (Figure 2). Like the first sketch, Anzaldúa composes this drawing with a collection of lines in varying qualities. Jagged and curling lines crowd the top and steadily move down the page. Like water moving around rocks, Anzaldúa's lines part to make space for shapes that evoke impressions of leaves, petals, and possibly insects. Resting at the bottom, a butterfly with open wings is embellished with spiral designs.

The steady pattern of lines, created through repetition, forms a visual rhythm that seems to vibrate or hum.

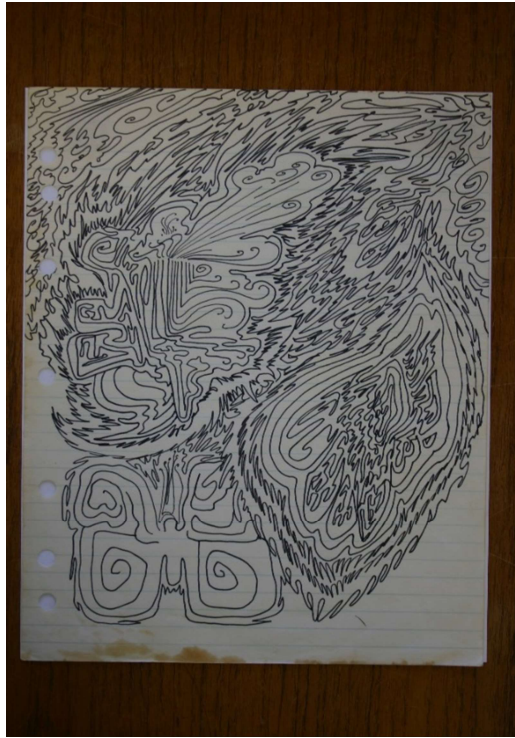


Figure 2. Gloria Anzaldúa, 18 Mai 82. Copyright © by the Gloria Anzaldúa Literary Trust. Benson Latin American Collection. University of Texas Libraries.

Working on June 20, 1987, Anzaldúa's third drawing is a pen on paper line sketch of a fish-like creature in an abstracted aquatic environment (Figure 3). The fish positioned at the bottom of the composition is medium-sized relative to its surroundings. Its body is formed by a tear-drop shape that has one undulating fin that begins at its mouth, flows down the back, and merges with a thin forked tail. One large eye is visible that seems to gaze outward to Anzaldúa's initials and the date. If we are to take the position of the fish's eye and its dorsal fin as indicators of the fish's orientation, it swims upside-down and underneath a reef-structure or possibly aquatic plants. Two main sections compose the plants. At the top of the page is a long, thin shape that extends from the left then sharply angles toward the upper right-hand corner. A second part of the plant is sandwiched in between the angular section and the fish. While the middle plant follows in a similar angled trajectory from left to upper-right, its incline is more graduated, and its shape is rendered less severe by branching that gently curves out the bottom-right side.

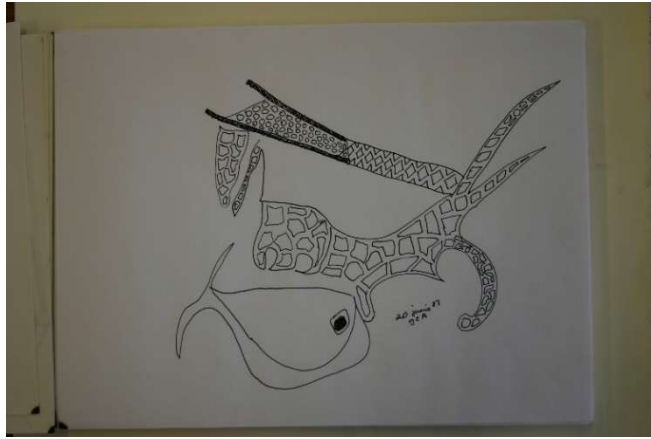


Figure 3. Gloria Anzaldúa, 18 Mai 82. Copyright © by the Gloria Anzaldúa Literary Trust. Benson Latin American Collection. University of Texas Libraries.

## 2.2. Vitality of all beings

While each of the three drawings offer a different composition and assortment of animals, they all employ artistic devices such as line work, repetition, and pattern to create a sense of vitality within the beings depicted. For instance, in *18 Mai 82* the overall gesture of Anzaldúa's hand combines careful outlines with unrestrained marks giving the composition an expressive energy. The variety of feelings emitting from each form, characterized by line quality, may be distinct, yet, the repetition of lines and shapes make the work cohesive. This variety within unity illustrates the ways Anzaldúa envisions spirituality—commonality and difference co-exist:

*Because we're all from the same speck. We're just different specks from this big fire. You know what I mean? We just have different forms. Some of us are black, some of us are white, some are short, some are tall. Some of us are in vegetable flesh, some of us are in animal flesh. It's a matter of the vibration of consciousness: The vibration of the consciousness of that plant over there is different from that of a towel and different from that of a person. (Anzaldúa and Keating, 2000)*

In the drawing we see difference between forms of being, which are brought together through connecting lines and proximity, perhaps indicating a common vibrational quality or spirit. In the image, the wellbeing of the creatures intertwine, thus supporting Anzaldúa's call to care for all lifeforms. Indeed, when we discover common needs between humans and nonhumans, we are more invested in social and environmental activism.

Line work functions similarly in her second untitled drawing; however, to a greater extent. While lines establish a visual cohesion between insect and plant-like shapes, they also extend beyond these forms. Indeed, Anzaldúa does not assign detail and visual weight to only a few select



subjects but allows her design to spread out equally across the page. All portions of the drawing hold equal value and interest, like in Anzaldúa's discussion of spirituality. She (2000) notes in an interview that through spirituality, *"you come up against an awareness that the universe is alive. It pulsates, everything's alive: nature, trees, the sky, and the wind. Once you connect with that, you feel like you're part of interconnecting organisms—vegetable, animal, mineral—and everything has some kind of consciousness."* The way in which Anzaldúa creates ambiguous forms through series of lines, creates a visual unity that supports her theory of a metaphysical connection between forms of being.

In addition, there is an energetic quality that Anzaldúa creates through her line work. Like a continuous contour drawing that creates shapes and planes through one unbroken line, the sketch depicts all the subjects as parts of a whole. Every being is pulsating with energy within itself and in rhythm with its surroundings. Anzaldúa (2015) describes spirituality in similar terms, *"You stand on tierra Sagrada—nature is alive and conscious; the world is ensouled. [...] You become reacquainted with a reality called spirit, a presence, force, power, and energy within and without. Spirit infuses all that exists—organic and inorganic—transcending the categories and concepts that govern your perception of material reality."* The drawing's rhythmic lines illustrate Anzaldúa's theory of spirituality as being composed of networked spiritual connections. Furthermore, her drawing helps us to conceptualize a leveling out of value. Through the even distribution of detail, all forms become equally active and valuable. As such, Anzaldúa's sketch extends her writing to give us visual characteristics of spiritual energy, which is flexible—it expands and contracts—and is continuous.

In the third drawing, Anzaldúa employs a pattern technique to infuse vitality into her figures. The fish's body and underwater foliage are composed of a mix of curved and angular lines. However, unlike the fish's minimalist form, the plants are made more visually complex through a series of patterned shapes that fill in the foliage. While the patterns function as a stylistic move to distinguish the plants from the fish, they also serve to activate the drawing much in the same way the other two drawings employ repetition and pattern to enliven their compositions. Such detail to sections of the drawing could indicate a shift in her perception of these beings. In the interview, Anzaldúa (2000) notes the role of the imagination in reconfiguring her perception to the environment:

*You start looking at rocks in a different way—at birds—and when they appear and when they don't appear and you let your imagination act as a center that connects and sorts through all the data and comes out with what you want. I think the imagination does*

*that: it will look at the clouds and project certain images in the clouds so that you see certain patterns, and the clouds stop being some kind of weather phenomena and become part of this force that pulsates, that's everywhere.*

Anzaldúa employs imagination to cultivate her spiritual connection to her surroundings. By viewing clouds as imbued with a collective energy, Anzaldúa notes the commonalities between different beings. Applied to her *20 junio 87* sketch, we might read her intricate pattern work as one way Anzaldúa envisioned a collective spiritual force running through all beings.

### **2.3. Interconnectivity between beings**

Just as Anzaldúa's repetition of lines and pattern work relates to her theory of spirituality that asserts humans and nonhumans possess vitality, her artistic choices also illustrate an interconnectivity she theorizes between all forms of being. For example, in the *18 Mai 82* sketch, diverse beings become entangled with one another. Lines flow from one figure to another creating a tight composition. Anzaldúa (2009) also articulates spirituality as a deep connection between multiple lifeforms: *"Like love, spirituality is a relational activity leading to deep bonds between people, plants, animals, and the forces of nature. Spirituality not only transforms our perception of 'ordinary' life and our relationships with others, but also invites encounters with other realities, other worlds."* Because spirituality can offer us an alternative lens to view the world, this sketch could be interpreted as glimpsing between the surface of *"ordinary' life"* to realize our relation to other beings. Indeed, Anzaldúa combines signifiers of day-to-day living, such as times and locations, with a conglomeration of beings that may be directly or indirectly related to these events.

In addition to unifying the image, Anzaldúa's detailed patterning may also characterize a change in one's perspective through spiritual awareness that produces *conocimiento* or new knowledge. According to Anzaldúa (2015), *conocimiento* includes a spiritual connection among all beings:

*With awe and wonder you look around, recognizing the preciousness of the earth, the sanctity of every human being on the planet, then ultimate unity and interdependence of all beings—somos todos un país. Love swells in your chest and shoots out of your heart chakra, linking you to everyone/everything—the Aboriginal in Australia, the crow in the forest, the vast Pacific Ocean. You share a category of identity wider than any social position or racial label. This conocimiento motivates you to work actively to see that no harm comes to people, animals, ocean—to take up spiritual activism and the work of healing.*

If we are related to all forms of being, and therefore, should work to care for animals, humans, and nature, especially pertaining to the common issues shared by these groups, then the *18 Mai 82* sketch may illustrate how Anzaldúa imagined the shape of our interconnection. Different forms push and pull one another, negotiating space and influencing each other. Human everyday life, symbolized by scheduled dates and times, is never separate from nonhuman life, instead it is just one piece of a collection of events that occur within a planetary existence.

In the untitled sketch, Anzaldúa activates the entire composition. Indeed, the use of pattern courses across her subjects and into the negative space. Typically, in two-dimensional visual art, artists will create negative space to emphasize their positive shapes. However, in Anzaldúa's drawing, very little of the composition would be considered empty space. Except for a small portion at the bottom of the page, Anzaldúa chooses to activate the spaces in-between her shapes with energetic lines. Her stylistic choice disrupts the common format that subordinates the background to position a subject as the focal point. Instead, Anzaldúa balances the sketch by spreading visual weight across the page. Such a move could be read as indicating that spirit is infused in every being *and* what is typically viewed as "empty" space. Anzaldúa's drawing calls us to reimagine this space not as a void but as alive and equally infused with spirit.

In *20 junio 87* we can also take note of the variety of beings, which make up this spiritual collective, that may be part of Anzaldúa's (2015) connection to *Yemaía*, the orisha (goddess) associated with the oceans in Yoruba beliefs. Anzaldúa (2015) felt a strong connection to *Yemaía*:

*Every day you visit the sea, walk along Yemaía's glistening shores. You want her to know you, to sense your presence as you sense hers. You know deep down that she's not independent of humans, not indifferent, not set apart. At the lips del mar you begin your ritual/prayer: with the heel of your left foot you draw a circle in the sand, then walk its circumference, stand at the center, and voice your intention: to increase awareness of Spirit, recognize our interrelatedness, and work for transformation.*

Anzaldúa's connection to *Yemaía*/the ocean can be seen in the sketch through her inclusion of marine animals and plants. Her focus on these aquatic beings perhaps indicates her recognition of the spiritual interconnection to animals, plants, and the ocean that encompasses both large systems (e.g., the ocean) as well as smaller parts (i.e., animals and plants).

Anzaldúa composed this sketch in a clustered fashion that focuses all her subjects in the center of the page while leaving excess negative spacing

in the surrounding border. This stylistic choice forces the viewer to focus on the fish, aquatic plants, and their interesting arrangement. The fish appears to be swimming upside-down near the plants. While this may be a maneuver to get closer to the plant structure to feed or seek shelter, a belly-up position often indicates a dead fish. Anzaldúa (2015) remarked on the fragility of life and human's role in the decimation of natural habitats, stating:

*I listen to the waves impact the stone, waves originating from beyond the far edge of the sea, perhaps caused by a storm in a distant corner of the earth or the ice melting in the artic. What we do has a ripple effect on all people and the planet's natural environment. We are accountable for all the wars, the disasters caused by humans—none of us are blameless. [...] Let's use art and imagination to discover how we feel and think and help us respond to the world.*

As Anzaldúa argues, human action does not occur in a vacuum, only affecting other humans. Instead, all life is connected; our actions have planetary effects. In her *20 junio 87* sketch, Anzaldúa may be considering how spirituality works through the imagination to illustrate who and what is at stake when human action negatively impacts the environment. By placing plants and animals as the subjects and not ancillary to humans, Anzaldúa emphasizes the more equitable arrangement of humans and nonhumans in her understanding of spirituality.

### 3. CONCLUSION

In this research, I have noted the value Anzaldúa places on creativity and the imagination to work out her theories and to communicate ideas to readers and viewers. Not only is creativity important for intellectual problem-solving, such as crafting theory, creativity and imagination are also vital to approaching social issues: *"Imagination opens the road to both personal and societal change—transformation of self, consciousness, community, culture, society. [...] Without imagination, transformation would not be possible"* (Anzaldúa, 2015). Through my analysis of Anzaldúa's sketches, I note the value of her visual art to assist her audience in the imagining process. After analyzing her sketches, I find myself pondering the rich energy that weaves together the blades of grass and move upward into the trees, the points of connection between my laptop, table, chair, dog, and myself that exist beyond the fact that I'm in physical contact with all these beings. Anzaldúa helps me to see these spiritual connections through her artwork.

The scope and applications of Anzaldúa's understanding of spirituality is far-reaching, yet, it is also often underappreciated in the secular circles her work is read. Anzaldúa highly valued spirituality;

however, she notes the tendency for academia to marginalize or dismiss spirituality based on the ways it has been proffered by New Age metaphysical beliefs. She (2015) states, *“Academics disqualify spirituality except as anthropological studies done by outsiders, and spirituality is a turn-off for those exposed to so-called New Agers’ use of flaky language and Pollyanna-like sentiments disconnected from the grounded realities of people’s lives and struggles.”* In addition, she (2015) also finds spiritual practitioners lack social and political engagement, asserting that *“[m]ost contemporary spiritual practitioners in this country ignore the political implications and do not concern themselves with our biggest problem and challenge: racism and other racial abuses. They’re not concerned with violence against children and women, with poverty and the attacks against nature.”* While common presentations of spirituality (that mask cultural appropriation and colonial practices) may perpetuate depoliticization, Anzaldúa’s theory of spirituality calls for socio-political engagement through interconnectivity and creativity.

Indeed, Anzaldúa’s artwork was one way of viewing the world and sharing the connection she established among spirituality, interconnectivity, and creativity. Academic disciplines invested in analyzing social issues can benefit from examining Anzaldúa’s written and visual theories because she presents a spirituality that is deeply enmeshed with, not removed from, the concerns of marginalized groups. Imagining social transformation from a spirit-focused perspective begins with an understanding that everything is linked and, therefore, our personal choices have impact beyond ourselves. She used creativity not only to communicate her theories but also to inspire social change. According to Anzaldúa (2000), *“[w]e have to first put the changes that we want made into words or images. We have to visualize them write them, communicate them to other people and stick with committing to those intentions, those goals, those visions. Before any changes can take place you have to say and intend them. It’s like a prayer, you have to commit yourself to your visions.”* In examining Anzaldúa’s artwork, which involves all forms of life, we gain another perspective to read her intentions and vision for social change.

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