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"We are all healers": Romantic Curanderismo in the Poems of Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/*La Frontera – *The New Mestiza*

Pascale Guibert♦

At the beginning of September 2020, the WWF Living Planet Report recorded "an alarming average drop of 68% since 1970" in "the population sizes of mammals, birds, fish, amphibians and reptiles". All these species, including our own, consequently, have been endangered by a human presence so overwhelming that it has highly and deeply modified all the structural components of the planet Earth—to the point that a new word to name this new era seemed necessary: the Anthropocene. Humans' activity on Earth clearly appears to be what is endangering landscape. Questioning all along W.J.T. Mitchell's now famous assertion that the power of landscape "is a relatively weak power compared to that of armies, police forces, governments, and corporations" (Mitchell, 2002: vii), these pages will present landscape's constitutive "weakness" as an active counterbalance to the overwhelming forces that tipped the Earth into the age of the Anthropocene.

A reflection on the place and role of landscape in this our third—and maybe final (Steffen, 2007: 618-619; Szerszynski 2012: 172)—stage of the Anthropocene is what is at stake here. Landscape, with and in Gloria Anzaldúa's 1987 *Borderlands/*La Frontera—*The New Mestiza* will be listened to as it expresses its/our suppurating wounds. Indeed, in those wounds, it will find its own capacity to heal (de la Portilla, 2009: 23; Anzaldúa, 1987, 2012: 92) according to "the philosophy of traditional healing, as practiced in the Texas borderland area" (de la Portilla, 2009: 23).

Anzaldúa's 1987 *Borderlands* poems, like those other poems long before them—Wordsworth and Coleridge's 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*, inaugurating both British High Romanticism and what Steffen sees as Stage 1 of the Anthropocene (Steffen, 2007: 616)—were written with a "*purpose*" (Wordsworth and Coleridge 1798, 2005:

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291—original italics). The purpose of these later, Stage 2, poems is comparable to that of Wordsworth and Coleridge's "experiments" (49): a deep dis-order is felt and observed all around; a new way of dealing with each other, with our surroundings, within our surroundings, must be given form to, poetically. Landscapes are made "thinking places" (Guibert, 2015), places whose poetics displays and models new forms of relationships.

I want to try and read Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* poems in the spirit of opening in which they were written. Written by a shaman and academic queer Chicana who let herself be nourished by multiple affiliations to cultures, grammars, languages, these poems, which lace them all, aim at nothing less than the creation of a new race in their image: *The New Mestiza*. Coming second, in a two-part volume whose first part consists mostly in unclassifiable prose, these poems can also be recognized, among many other things, as one of these "second sel[ves]" which Wordsworth traced a way for in "Michael," the last poem of his own second part to *Lyrical Ballads* (Wordsworth and Coleridge 1798, 2005: 271).

Taking Wordsworth's relational poetics away from "these Hills" of Cumbria—that is from the spatial stage 1 of the Anthropocene—to "this tragic valley of South Texas" (Anzaldúa, 1987, 2012: 112)—which happens to be very close to the spatial scene where stage 2 of the Anthropocene started, at Alamagordo, New Mexico, on July 16th, 1945, which is "the time of the world's first nuclear bomb explosion" (Zalasiewicz, 2015: 196)—Anzaldúa's landscapes continue the Romantic gesture of reconnection to nature, to each other, and to ourselves, which Wordsworth's poetry indefatigably prepared. Of the order of modeling for didactic Wordsworth, of the order of shamanic healing for *curandera* Anzaldúa, those reconnections conducted through poetics aim at and amount to a redefinition of ways of doing and ways of seeing the landscape. In his 2014/2018 *Living Off Landscape: or the Unthought-of in Reason*, François Jullien calls for such a redefinition of the ways of doing landscape, of being *with* landscape. Seeing the classical western tradition as terribly constraining from its very start, he opens a space for a renewal, a re-thinking of landscape, in the con-frontation he organizes with the Chinese tradition—which should heal landscape, freeing it from what has always choked it. It will appear in these pages that the reflective landscapes of both British Romantic and contemporary Chicana poets address the questions posed by the philosopher. They present the possibility of a healing renewal within their very form.

As with all sick bodies, in view of healing them, we must first follow both poets and philosopher in their apprehension of what is wrong with their/our landscapes—Anthropocene landscapes; then we will unfold with them the general advice provided; before eventually presenting the cure envisaged.

"So what is it
that people want
when they
come to see you?"
I asked.
"They all want magic.
la cosa es — the thing is —
there is no magic,"
Golondrina anwered.
(de la Portilla, 2009: n. p.)

Centered in the top half of a floating page, between Acknowledgments and Introduction, this short dialogue between anthropologist-*cum-curandera* Elizabeth de la Portilla and San Antonio *curandera* Golondrina has been transcribed. Like the silhouette of a shadowy lock, it seems to invite a closer look, deep attention, the requisite fold both upon one's self and the lock, to receive whatever there is to receive from such care. The non-secret gained from this plain down-to-earth exchange between *curanderas* is that it is within the field of immanence itself that any cure will be found, that the healing of what ails the field of immanence and all its constitutive agents can take place. In Anzaldúan terms, this reads: "Let the wound caused by the serpent be cured by the serpent." (68)

Picturesque traditions

Our Earth suffocates. It chokes under the weight and rhythm of human activity: in their widely quoted, groundbreaking, 2007 article, "The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?," Steffen et *alii*'s enumerations swelling into whole paragraphs and paragraphs into subparts, dizzying figures presenting themselves in massively impressive columns, and the ever thickening black fillings of the diagrams presenting the impacts of the changes in the degree of human "enterprise" (Steffen, 2007: 617) leave no doubt about that. This very diagnosis is precisely what incited the international and interdisciplinary group of researchers working with 1995 Nobel Prize in atmospheric chemistry, Paul Crutzen, to propose that a new name for this new era be adopted. Having demonstrated that "Human activities have become so pervasive and profound that they rival the great forces of Nature and are pushing the Earth into planetary *terra incognita*," they bring forth "The term *Anthropocene* [to suggest] that the Earth has now left its natural geological epoch, the present interglacial state called the Holocene." (614)

Even though the dating of the era was later questioned by the ever-widening group of scientists discussing the matter, "[the] first proposals of the Anthropocene

(Crutzen 2000) clearly linked the start of the Anthropocene with the Industrial Revolution, around the beginning of the 19th century". It marked the beginning of "an interval of rapid population growth, urban growth and industrialization powered by increasing use of fossil fuels" (Zalasiewicz, 2015: 198) that left their traces all over the planet, on all the layers of the Earth System — deep geological soil, oceans, surface, air. Unlike his later, post 1810 *Guide to the Lakes* and, above all, his 1844 letters to the *Morning Post* against the Kendal-Windermere Railway project, Wordsworth's 1798-1807, "golden decade," poetry, it can be argued, does not immediately tackle problems of environmental pollution (the term appears in this sense in the English language in 1877, according to volume XII of the 1989 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*). And yet, it can also easily be demonstrated that the wider concerns for "Man" and "Nature," placed together, in redefined, respectful-of-the-other encounters voiced by this earlier poetry, and especially via the poetics of its landscapes, definitely manifest a form of what Félix Guattari called "ecosophy" (Guibert, 2009). Sometimes the poetry intimates the appropriate connections through joyous and confident enjambments, prepositions rebounding and resonating at the opening end of lines, punctuation marks propelling forward the long paragraphs of blank verse, as, for example, in the acknowledgment of the role that Nature played in leading the poet to his love of Man, in book VIII of the 1805 *Prelude*:

> For I already had been taught to love
> My fellow-beings, to such habits trained
> Among the woods and mountains, where I found
> In thee a gracious guide to lead me forth
> […] (Wordsworth 1805, VIII, 69-72, 270)

Sometimes it turns back upon itself and diagnoses with precision where some bad cases of unbalance came from, as in this further passage from book VIII, lines 472-497 (290-292), where Wordsworth acknowledges the picturesque craze which he had let himself be addicted to—to the detriment of both represented Nature and Man, and of his art. In lines as tormented as a picturesque painting of the second half of the eighteenth century, Wordsworth exposes in retrospect how this highly artificial aesthetics made him relentlessly distort the natural elements that he seized from the lived landscape, and kill without qualms the humans he encountered there, emptying them of their lives in iteration and figuration. This perversion, he explicitly writes as a deadly sin, in the adverb which qualifies this practice's reliance on brutal captures, "greedily" (538). He also expresses it, ominously, in terms of a highly contagious disease: "From touch of this new power / nothing was safe" (525-526).

And indeed, if in paintings, picturesque aesthetics "just" cast the poor in the shadows and/or pushed them in the farthest possible distance (Barrell, 1998: 86-88, 21-22); if in poetry it "just" naturalised them, and turned them into the puppets

of a conventionally formatted authorial intention; in real life, on English ground, it required that subaltern habitations be removed from the site and sight of the lucky wealthy owners of vast domains, in order to comply with the Brownian plan of controling and clearing which produced here on Earth the ideal landscape: the English landscape garden—"a landscape completely devoid of human figures and occupied only by occasional grazing animals," a landscape with "a military feel" to it (Cosgrove 1998: 214). Great names resonate here and unfold a territory: Rousham, Blenheim, Chatsworth, Nuneham Courtney… Man asserts his presence and power through forms of landscaping which produce erasures and constructions that, in Cosgrove's words, are "huge," "enormous," "arrogant". They "overwhelm," "subject," take "total control" of land, humans, animals. One after the other, the sentences that deploy the landscaped domains evoked here manifest the intimidation they exert in verbs conjugated mostly in the passive voice and adverbs diminishing agency. The rhetorics of enormity which striates Cosgrove's text, as he evokes the insistance on power and control characteristic of the works of the period, manifests what was later going to appear as the great shift in the humans' way of dealing with their surroundings, the Anthropocene. It was beginning, there and then.

Writing from the Texan borderlands in the second half of the 20th century—another valley, eerily "similarly treated" too (*ibid.*, 214)—Anzaldúa retraces the utter consummation of this human power to the all too clearly perceptible detriment of both Earth System and critters.

> In the 1930s, after Anglo agribusiness corporations cheated the small Chicano landowners of their land, the corporations hired gangs of *mexicanos* to put out the brush, chaparral and cactus and to irrigate the desert. […] Later the Anglos brought in huge machines and root plows and had the Mexicans scrape the land clean of natural vegetation. In my childhood I saw the end of dryland farming. I witnessed the land cleared; saw the huge pipes connected to underwater sources sticking up in the air. (Anzaldúa 1987, 2012: 31)

The opening chapter of *Borderlands*/La Frontera operates a return (in prose, mostly, but in many other forms too), to "The Homeland, Aztlán/*el otro México*," as its title reads (23). From the very start, then, the landscape is always already lost. But losses pile up on this second-stage Anthropocenic landscape: as words fill the pages, of course, definitely, but also in far more brutal ways than we are ready to admit with intellectual ease. Dramatically announcing the "criticality" (Steffen, 2007: 620) of the impending third stage, where Steffen questions our capacity as "stewards" to "ensure the sustainability of Earth's life support system" (618), man's will to wreak havoc is deployed to the full. The paragraph quoted here, mixing geography, history, and personal memory is a landscape of uprooting. The desert ecosystem of southwestern

USA is shown being conscientiously destroyed, step by step, chronologically. Returning to it creates something of the vortices of a maelstrom: the clearance has started, it will come back and continue its works. Yet, the brute force of ecological disaster, economic war and systemic racial violence is almost sanitized by the neat prose—its historical, anthropological bent—, by the choice of this episode and its accompanying childish images, and eventually by the mere suggestiveness of the last sentence: "More big land corporations came in and bought up the remaining land." It is only in the next gyre, when the episodes return effectually, in the second part of the volume, where the poems run, that violence strikes with full force. There, it is experienced in the flesh, each poetic line pounding.

The poem "We Call Them Greasers" (156-157), spoken in the voice of an Anglo male colonist, *embodies*, literally, the rather abstract last sentence of the prose paragraph just discussed. Innumerable deciding and acting Is, like the I of "We Call Them Greasers," make the "big land corporations" evoked in the prose. And these Is did not always "buy" the land they coveted, but appropriated it from those they found living there, frightening them, at best, by waving at them "a piece of paper with some writing" (l. 13, 156). At the very best. What opens, in the first four lines, as a quasi idyllic and quasi conventional evocation of landscape in the Western mode (apart from the smell of "sweat" (l. 4), which escapes the well-wrought frame and may be proleptic of the fall) quickly degenerates, and turns into a scene of ordinary horror on Texan borderlands in the age of the Anthropocene. Precisely once the surveying of the grounds is done, the landscape appraised, does the violent seizure start. And it will not end, not even at the end of the poem.

> She lay under me whimpering.
> I plowed into her hard
> kept thrusting and thrusting
> felt him watching from the mesquite tree
> heard him keening like a wild animal
> in that instant I felt such contempt for her
> round face and beady black eyes like an Indian's.
> Afterwards I sat on her face until
> her arms stopped flailing,
> didn't want to waste a bullet on her.
> The boys wouldn't look me in the eyes.
> I walked up to where I had tied her man to the tree
> and spat in his face. Lynch him, I told the boys. (156-157, l. 33-45)

The "master-slave" dialectic displayed in any traditional Western landscape—relying on an active seeing subject and a passive object being consumed by the gaze of the subject—is here played to its utmost.

Refugia

The problem, then, is a problem of overspilling, overfilling, overcontroling. We, humans, smother the Earth and each other to death. We fill everything, all the layers of the Earth System, propelled by our frenzied desires of more possession, more consumption. We fill with refuse, with camera eyes, with walls and pipes, with intensive crops, with news and talks and projections… We fill the Earth System with ourselves. We fill, we kill. By obstruction. In her 2015 article "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin," Haraway, having made kin with anthropologist Anna Tsing, gives a generic name to what has been so filled, and condemned: *refugia*.

> Anna Tsing argues that the Holocene was the long period when refugia, places of refuge, still existed, even abounded, to sustain reworlding in rich cultural and biological diversity. Perhaps the outrage meriting a name like Anthropocene is about the destruction of places and times of refuge for people and other critters. (160)

"[P]laces of refuge […] sustain reworlding": they nourish, prolong and reinvent Life, the World, in ever surprising ways and dis/re/connections—out-of-the-way ways. Because they were not instituted as frames, but gaps, rather, they could open as counter-forces to the very world system within which they grew and "existed". In that sense, they should be likened to those insterstitial spaces of shadows which Didi-Huberman's *Survival of the Fireflies* discloses and guards against the tyranny of the over-present over-visible. In the magnificent first essay on Pasolini, "Hells?," it is suggested that the poet and filmmaker lost his life precisely when he could no longer see the infinitesimal light of the glow worms, when he killed them, even, by writing in that baneful article for the *Corriere della sera*, on the 1st of February 1975, that they were no more. Then could he no longer escape the brutality of the searching lights of the watchtowers, then had he given up to the forces of the power in place, its spilling, blinding, drowning stifling lights. He died, assassinated, a few months later. Obliterating the places of refuge of our world, those shadowy interstices that open within it, those infinitesimal possibilities fluttering about, is, in Didi-Huberman's terms, "to act defeated".

> To act defeated: to be convinced that the machine is finishing its work without rest or resistance. To see only the *whole*. And thus not to see the space—though it may be interstitial, intermittent, nomadic, improbably located—of openings, of possibilities, of flashes, *in spite of all.* (Didi-Huberman, 2009/2018: 20)

The powerless, so weakly glowing, moving, place-in-displacement of Didi-Huberman's surviving fireflies is the space of landscape. It is the space where landscape happens, grows, exists and reworlds—from within the world. In his 2014 treatise on landscape, *Living Off Landscape: or the Unthought-of in Reason*, Jullien recognizes just that. In the opening paragraph, we read such an admission of deadly obstruction that seemed to have condemned European landscape from the very start. The premise of Jullien's work is that

> we in Europe might have begun with a bad definition of landscape, or in any case, from a definition that has thrashed, constrained, and perhaps strangled the *possibility* that landscape embodies. (1)

Then, the necessary cure to heal European landscape from suffocation appears to consist in a certain letting go, an un-tightening of the frame(s). Prescribing *de*construction (45), Jullien provides in his text a grammar adequate to the task, with myriad negative prefixes appended to the verbs of action that can reanimate our landscape, in great need of "undoing," "unseizing," "un-miring," "unfolding," "disencumbering"… Learning from the Chinese ways of naming landscape through pairs of words—"mountain(s)-waters(s)"; "wind-light"—Jullien shows how landscape can grow and open in(de)finitely through the correlation and tension between the two terms of these pairs. The life of landscape, landscape *as* life, as "*possibility*," forms through what opens between the two terms of these pairs, in what links them through unbinding, in which all idea of being, of stasis, is immediately forsaken. And then, there, we enter "the province of flow and imbuing, of propagation and attraction, and of waves and intensity." (45)

Wordsworth received such intimation—of the order of revelation—in the event of the landscape that opened to him at the top of Snowdon, in 1791, "*on the edge of the void*" (Badiou, 2007: 175). Having climbed all through "a summer's night" (Wordsworth 1805, XIII, 10, 458), Wordsworth and his companions reach the summit just at the right time, the moment which picturesque landscape hunters are most partial to: when the world gets illuminated by the first ray of the rising sun. Against all horizons of expectations and constructed semantics, in a dizzying play on the *sound* of the interjection "lo," the Wordsworthian I's gaze does not look down at the solid ground just made visible to him by the attractive light, but up, "at height/Immense above [his] head". This fragilizes the I, endangers him, as both subject and object, in constitutional relation, are lost in the disappearance of a solid world to seize. The romantic I finds himself "on the shore […] of a huge sea of mist": between a pair of terms, "shore-mist," un-making a landscape, revealing it thus, whereby the I is also redefined, anew. "Shore-mist," there, "on the edge of the void" of the lines, overhanging, offers a very brief and scarce refuge which places the I in a very unstable, out-of-the way in between, where both he as subject and the

scenery as "'ob-ject'" "projected"/ "'cast'" "'before'" his eye (Jullien 2018: 16) vanish. Reworlding happens in this very romantic moment of dissolution, which is opened by the poetry as

> […] a blue chasm, a fracture in the vapour,
> A deep and gloomy breathing-place, through which
> Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
> Innumerable, roaring with one voice.
> The universal spectacle throughout
> Was shaped for admiration and delight,
> Grand in itself alone, but in that breach
> Through which the homeless voice of waters rose,
> That dark deep thoroughfare, had Nature lodged
> The soul, the imagination of the whole. (XIII, 56-65, 460)

Landscape—as landscaping "*possibility*"—does open here within landscape. This is reworlding taking place before our eyes reading the poem. Call it also "the *operation of the world* in its entirety" (Jullien 2018: 45; 18). If Wordsworth's formulation, at first glance, may look quite conventional, and still studded, here and there, with neoclassical paraphernalia (that "universal spectacle […] *shaped for admiration and delight*" for instance), once the breach is opened, l. 62, and the poetic faculty is no longer "usurped" by clichés and by sights (Wordsworth 1805: XIII, 51, 460 ; VI, 455, 212 ; VI, 533, 216), all limits are let loose: a multiplicity of [o] sounds explodes into a fugue in the last lines of this verse paragraph and transports the I and us—very far, away from the perceptible. The I vanishes altogether, actually, as can be unseen here.

Almost two centuries later, on a land whose most conspicuous relief is a border, Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa writes to make her words a refuge, that is an opening of landscaping "*possibility*". As a shaman, she knows that, according to "the grounding principle in curanderismo," the world must be seen "as a whole system". Hence, as de la Portilla asserts,

> Keeping this sense of harmony, of balance within oneself betters the odds in dealing with the often unbalancing world in which we live and have little control over. (64)

The absolute interconnectedness between the smaller "container" of the body and the larger "container" of the Earth (115) requires that both be healed together—or none. In Anzaldúa, this reciprocity finds expression in a perfectly symetrical aphorism, where the I and the Earth spin on a comma: "I change myself, I change the world." (92) Hence, if she wants to turn the world, and the poetics to express it, into a refuge, she must first make *herself* one. She wants that because she knows, for having lived it

everyday of her life, in the flesh, the tragic truth of Haraway's assertion: "Right now, the Earth is full of refugees, human and not, without refuge." (160) And she would have fully agreed with the Professor in the History of Consciousness in thinking that

> our job is to make the Anthropocene as short/thin as possible and to cultivate with each other in every way imaginable epochs to come that can replenish refuge. (*Ibid.*)

This is especially pressing as with the border wars over the territory, one can never know for sure whether one has found a refuge or has become a refugee. Borders and definitions of *atravesados* are so shifty! (Anzaldúa, 1987, 2012: 25, 28) In the Rio Grande Valley, hunting and escaping, crossing the border and catching the migrants seems to have become something of a well-rehearsed ballet, where everyone plays their role to perfection: the "'*mojados*'" and the "Border Patrol," evoked in the present simple of a customary situation highlighted by the indeterminate plural, appear in paragraphs so neatly cut that they could be so many scenes from a video being played ceaselessly. (33-34) Hide-and-seek is the game, then, representative of the Anthropocene and its disasters. It could have been fun, maybe, had it not been so deadly.

Gloria Anzaldúa writes to leave behind her, in her words, the possibility of refuges, because she knows that the game is over, and everybody, all critters whatsoever, on the brink of losing. From where she stands, the refuge she opens cannot be something like the Wordsworthian "blue chasm, a fracture in the vapour," somewhere at the fathomless bottom of a mountain precipice. It has to be between the lines of the border. Thus *Borderlands/*La Frontera opens a myriad border lines in all possible ways—from the layout of the front cover to the configuration of the volume in two parts striated by numerous subparts, and via, among others, the estranging and varied use of two languages, English and Spanish. But what will be considered here is the refuge that she lets open within herself, by the death of her self, of her common being, the death that she accepts, as the ultimate stage of the so Wordsworthian journey into "a poet's mind" (Wordsworth 1805, XIII, 408, 480). The movement deep down into the self, to visit the yet unnamed unconscious, which led Wordsworth, at the end of the *Prelude*, to acknowledge his and Coleridge's role as "Prophets of Nature" (442, 482) leads Anzaldúa to acknowledge her "don" (de la Portilla, 2009: 108) as a *curandera*. The poem "*La curandera*" (198-201) retraces the successive deaths necessary to resurrect as a resurrector, or healer. Its eleven stanzas are so many borderlines, borderline *states*, systematically overflowed by other forms of life, of living, rather, that appear always surprising, always other than what is expected. The overflow does not happen in the black slabs—or "blocks" (96)—of the stanzas, in their ambiguous presences tracing emptiness to the utmost of their sign-power—but in the gaps between them. It is only when the I has died two or three

times within the stations of the stanzas, that she ends up awaking as a *curandera*. The event, truly *"on the edge of the void"* (Badiou, 2007: 175), happens after she has been visited in her deathly slumber by snakes that tell her they will be her "'healing spirit guides'" (86, 200). Although definitely linked to Anzaldúa's personal history (she was seriously bitten three times by snakes and went through a near-death experience in one occasion) and to her very specific way of writing *Borderlands*/La Frontera, it is also difficult not to interconnect these snakes to Coleridge's Ancient Marinere. He too is resurrected from his Life-in-Death and Death-in-Life when he acknowledges the presence of the water-snakes (Wordsworth and Coleridge, 1800, 2005: 264-273, 63), and he too tells his story to bring forth redemption. This most poetic connection manifests itself again in the last stanza of "*La curandera*" where the weak and puny *romero* plant that the *curandera* saw and saved from being choked by the weeds, redeemed, blesses the other herbs around it. This recognition of beauty and the gush of kindness that flows over both the 1798 ballad stanzas and the 1987 poem just then have the immediate effect of pushing death away: the Albatross that hung on the Marinere's neck falls off (280-284, 64) and in the patch that was all weeds, innumerable variegated healing plants flourish.

> The tiny *romero* grew and grew,
> told them, "You're pretty too."
> The weeds became long graceful grasses,
> they bowed down to the *romero*.
> Herbs of all kinds
> poked their heads out of the earth
> covered the fields.
> I've been a *curandera*
> since that day
> and Juan Dávila has been my apprentice. (117-126, 201)

If "Herbs of all kinds" do flourish here, within the magical field of the stanza, their healing power will only be made efficient through their being picked, cut, dried, ground … When the poem ends, after so many deaths, the world can be healed. But it remains to be done.

The shaman as *curandera* successively renounces former selves in order to help their clients—and their world—heal: "Not only does their sense of self change, but also they become part of the public domain," writes de la Portilla about them (de la Portilla, 2009: 49). This is so today as it was at the very beginning of *curanderismo*—as we can read from the story of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca which she chooses to invoke quite at the beginning of her study, when she starts the presentation proper of *curandera.o* work. She sees XVIth century Cabeza de Vaca as "perhaps the first curandero, because of his blending of indigenous cultural material with European

religious ideology" (20), but also because this syncretism is deeply linked to the Spanish explorer's many losses of lives and resurrections. In turn explorer, slave, trader, governor, captain, the proto-anthropologist had to die as a conquistador to become a *curandero*. De la Portilla comments that

> what Cabeza de Vaca experienced was life-changing in the same manner that the healers I work with have reported, where one's identity is changed into something else altogether. (20)

De la Portilla concludes about Cabeza de Vaca that "he became a bordercrosser" (21). The danger(s), the transformations at work, the deaths and the resurrections gone through, all involved in becoming a *curandero.a*, is precisely the kind of survival as "extra living" that *Borderlands*/La Frontera presents, reflecting (on) a certain terrain.

> In the Borderlands
> […]
> you are wounded, lost in action
> dead, fighting back; (Anzaldúa 1987, 2012: 33-34, 216)

Dávila land: the music of the here

The harmony that will appease the "battleground" (*ibid.*, l. 28) as we have now learnt from *curanderismo*, is to be looked for on the very grounds that it will heal. "Dávila land" (Anzaldúa 1987, 2012: 13, 224), the name of this borderlands battleground, is no la la land, and yet it contains music, it is the source of the harmony which Anzaldúa makes us recompose after her. "Dávila land" sings in its syllables, from the outset, and also as it runs, disperses and blends (sometimes bleeds, too) into so many other fields, far and near. It overflows from humans to places or *vice versa*—we remember encountering Juan Dávila as apprentice to the *curandera* in the poem bearing that very title. It echoes in a number of poems (176, 198, 222, 224). It sings in its syllables. And so doing, in its trickling echoes throughout the volume, as a series of variations and fugues, "Dávila land" produces healing music, in *Borderlands*/La Frontera. It unites what had clashed, gathers what was thought far apart so as to heal mythical, historical, personal traumas.

Dávila land, Tx, and the "City of Ávila" (5, 176), Spain, resonate and communicate. The "88 crenellated towers" (6, 176) of the Spanish city reflect (on) the xicalqcoliuhqui (and *vice versa*), that snake through *Borderlands*/La Frontera, as form of text and reference—both as a tribute to Anzaldúa's Aztec artistic and cultural affiliation, and as an acknowledgement to her personal geography and biography —. Their "indented embrasures" (100, 178) run infinitely (in the upturned 88) into each other.

These embrasures embrace with fire, too, and, as Wordsworth would have been content to notice, who dreamt of "spousal verse[s]" and "consummation[s] —," they "fit" (Wordsworth 1814, 1949: 57-58; 66-68, 4-5) thanks to these indentions. In *Borderlands*/La Frontera, a number of motifs—such as this zigzagging indention that tells of both friction and love, of blades and barbed wires, but also of familiar serpents and places of touching contact—are scattered, left, and taken up over and over again, throughout the volume, as concerns, forms (the lay out of the text on the page), structure. Together, they create not so much a visual pattern, because of their multifarious manifestations, as an immense system of internal rhymes, an underflow melody ceaselessly going on. Thereby are arresting frontiers invalidated—"*el mar* does not stop at borders" do we read in the course of the first appearance of the snake trace in the volume (51, 25) —; but thus also our active participation is called for, made necessary. The bits and pieces (shards from the past, cactus prickles, barbs, feathers, bits taken from different bodies at different times in the name of different fictions, relics and traces of all kinds) left scattered in the volume, need to be collected in passing and gathered into a transitory whole: then they will produce resonance, and the New Mestiza world will emerge from this, always in the process of being completed, mended, after it had been torn apart. How exquisitely does this fit the Wordsworthian image of a world in reconstruction! (Wordsworth 1814, 1949: 63, 5) In such a world, whose earthly foundations were being utterly modified by the brutal agency of Industrial Revolution, Wordsworth remodels connections and envisages soft agency, where nature and human clasp each other, grapple with each other, like we, readers, grapple with the syntax of his text, in order to make sense of it all. The Wordsworthian soft agent melts in the sonorities that modify it in its intercourse with the world. It,

> Even as an agent of the one great mind,
> Creates, creator and receiver both,
> working but in alliance with the works
> Which it beholds. (Wordsworth 1805, II, 272-275, 80)

"Holy Relics" (176-181), which retraces the geography of "Teresa de Cepeda Dávila y Ahumada"'s postmortem adventures—in their successive exhumations, to-and-fros from one non-resting place to another—cuts and tears, passion and desire everywhere, sets in vibration a major chord from which a multidirectional fugue departs. From Juan Dávila from Dávila land to Teresa de Cepeda Dávila (or back), through echoing syllables, reverberating concerns and mirroring imaginaries, a syncretic, symphonic, common ground opens: between the former conqueror's country and the present conquered land; between Anzaldúa *curandera* and the saint; between the too-ardently desired bodies of women; between some ancient Aztec religious practice which the same good abbots and priests who cut the body of Teresa

de Cepeda Dávila into pieces then to be scattered all over Europe and Christendom would definitely have held most barbaric... Visible in the little nail/phalange/finger-like quatrains that keep haunting the poem, the "holy relics" are also, very audibly, the voice of the poem, and its chorus.

> We are the holy relics,
> the scattered bones of a saint,
> the best loved bones of Spain.
> We seek each other. (1-4, 176; 59-62, 77; 89-92, 178; 192-195, 181)

Their fragmentary aspect, their littleness—compared to all the other, much more massive, stanzas of the poem—and their reiteration, intimate the (re)composition that remains to be performed. This is also expressed semantically in the last and shortest line of the four: "We seek each other." The poem, though, does not establish any link on its own. On the contrary, the uncanny voice from which it is spoken removes it from any immediacy. Besides, the poem surprises us by its out-of-placeness, in a volume otherwise quite rooted on American soil. This is exactly how it plays its part, how it requires us all to play *our* part: it titillates us into looking for the missing parts, in order to (re)compose the whole. It makes room for us in this universal hide and seek.

This procedure, amounting to connecting resonating bits and pieces, "present" in inaudible lines that produce music between blocks of paragraphs and stanzas, so as to produce the image of a whole universe, reverberates the first western attempt at providing a model of the universe: the Pythagoran *Musica Universalis* or Music of the Spheres. Jean-Pierre Birat, a specialist in materials and society, sees this ancient "attempt at connecting various realms of human knowledge" as the model of modern science (Birat, 2017: 2)—which still borrows many of its metaphors to express itself—. More particularly, establishing as it did "a mirror relationship between the world of people and abstract ideas and the world of nature" (2), the Music of the Spheres can be perceived as the ancestor of ecology—which the *Britannica online* defines as the "study of the relationships between organisms and their environment".

Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/*La Frontera, as a whole, orchestrates such a sonorous ecology. But it displaces it from the Spheres to the here. The music we are made to compose from the soil of the text, is the music of the presence here-and-now of a living culture, rooted in a specific ground, variously embodied. We hear a history that still pulses, encounter a geography that determines tempi, human relations whose tonalities sometimes seem to be beaten by external circumstances, but which can thus also be re-interpreted, as Anzaldúa's volume does, to strike brand new chords, and then draw a very different landscape, healed, harmonious—healed through a never-ending harmonizing process.

Music has a major part to play in the healing process which *Borderlands/*La Frontera sets the stage for. Besides all the fragments of popular songs sounding here and there in the text, and from its very first epigraph, considerations on music are developed in a chapter devoted to the question of language—a particularly sensitive question to a Chicana writer. The fact that the chapter called "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" opens on a very unpleasant scene at the dentist's, with the dentist getting angry at the "wild tongue" of the Chicana, a tongue that can't stay still and interferes with his own brutal foraging, is quite telling (75). Language is a trauma to the Chicana writer, whose tongues have always already been cut, by cultural traditions as well as political agendas. Being able to heal the world will necessitate a healing of the tongues—to overcome the imposed silence, to get rid of the fetters that tie one down in place, as to a dentist's seat, in order to let them be active participants in the process of living. These "Tradition of Silence" (76) and "Linguistic Terrorism" (80), which shut girls' and women's mouths, on Mexican American territory, and which Anzaldúa denounces with particular force in the chapter "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," can also be felt, as could have been expected, in the San Antonio of *curandera* anthropologist Elizabeth de la Portilla. It is indeed quite striking in fact that she almost opens the publication of her research on her capacity for silence (3). If it is true that the capacity for silence determines the quality of listening of the ethnographer, the inscription of this scientific quality within a specific culture, shared with Anzaldúa, cannot but make the silence in question more binding. For that matter, it is also just as striking that she almost ends the publication of her research on her own healing practice on her capacity to speak and write:

> My *don* manifests itself in the work I produce. Golondrina and the sisters believe that recounting their stories and keeping traditions alive through my writing and teaching is my calling; this is my healing. (108)

Like Anzaldúa before her, yet not as a poet but as an academic anthropologist, de la Portilla's healing practice consists in "Overcoming the Tradition of Silence" which stifles a community, hence which maims their landscape, and therefrom deforms the whole world. But as we know, now, the cure cannot be dispensed from outside. The disabled community itself needs to acknowledge their active part in the healing process, their part in the harmony of the whole ("'But does this work?' I ask her. 'Sure, if you have faith' she replies." [de la Portilla, 2009: 68]). Hence the anthropologist's task of collecting and transmitting their words and stories. It gives each member of the community their tongues back. A double re-membering is being performed then—which restores the equilibrium of the whole. A missing corner in the little "*cajitas*" (de la Portilla, 2009: 73) that each one of us is, is fixed, when the tongue that had been cut is put back in place.

If "Illness is sometimes talked about in terms of metaphor" (de la Portilla, 2009: 71), the cure is quite concrete. It always consists in re-establising the flow of energy between the different vessels constituting the larger vessel of an environment. It flows from body to body. Jo Ann and Lizzie, two other *curanderas* from San Antonio, express this tenet, and their concern at its being forgotten:

> People have forgotten the ties we all share with the earth and no longer understand that in severing the connection we lose a powerful method of healing ourselves. Lizzie rarely keeps her shoes on, as if unwilling to lose the touch of the earth beneath the soles of her feet. (71)

This premise of primordial importance to our world, is precisely the one taken up by *curandera* de la Portilla when she reminds us, doing her job as a publishing anthropologist, that "We are all healers and just need to be reminded of it" (5). Through our bodies landscapes will be healed that can heal the world.

Anzaldúa knew just that. This is why in re-animating the Music of the Spheres model to hint at the work there is to be done in order to partake in a harmonious world, she grounded it. She did not present it as an abstraction, but, on the contrary, manifested it materially to our senses and made us participate in the overall appreciation of what can be. In the poem "*Canción de la diosa de la noche*," which can be read as one of her poetic manifestoes, the instrument the poetess chooses for her art is not Orpheus's lyre, but "the lunar sistrum" (Anzaldúa 1987, 2012: 14, 218). This most unlyingly female and erotic representation of the origin of Anzaldúan landscapes, not only opens another line of flight from and to Dávila land, making kin with ancient Egypt, it also brings the body back into the making of landscape. And love. In the kind of intercourse which the sistrum intimates, the poetic landscapes of Anzaldúa are definitely manifested as related to bodily love.

> I shake earth, air, fire, and water
> in the lunar sistrum.
> I devour the roses of Isis. (13-15, 218)

Surprising as it may seem, this conception meets Jullien's, who writes about "the correlation of the 'self' and the 'world'" presentified in Chinese Mountain(s)-Water(s) landscapes:

> "Landscape" arises from such coupling. There is landscape when I *feel* at the same time as I *perceive*. Or let us say, rather, that I henceforth perceive inside myself as well as outside myself. (41, Jullien's italics)

Jullien's healing philosophy takes place on the ground of the exploratory divide (*l'écart*) which he has opened between western and Chinese cultures, his working field. The landscape that grows in this interspace, from the possibility residing in "the between" (*l'entre*), is affectual-perceptual. "The perceptual has to do with perception globally mobilized as a fund or *resource*." (44) It transgresses the limitations of the *perceived*, which have maimed from the start the western conception of landscape, and doomed it, in the subjet-object power relationship which conditioning it to perception implies. In the same way as the perceptual stands beyond the perceived of perception, the affectual is "*below all emotion*". It does not cristallize in an affect but unfolds in landscape, as landscape, "as a capacity—a more primordial capacity—to be affected." (44) The physicality of landscape is thus insisted on:

> A landscape 'touches' us, not accidentally or anecdotally but essentially, because in its pure exteriority it causes us to feel an inner kernel of self (more inner than 'self'). It reveals *the intimate* within me. (43)

"Touch" is what a sound landscape does. The active verb appears quite a number of times in this fourth chapter, "When the Perceptual Turns Out to Be Affectual". It even runs in the not-so-common French expression "*touchant au paysage*" (94)—which Jullien's thoughtful translator into English, Pedro Rodriguez, manages to render by "With landscape" (44), keeping us in good company. We are far from the alleged passivity and exclusive reliance on sight of western landscape! That landscape was, to Jullien, from the start, a question of love, is obvious from the French title of his 2014 opus, *Vivre de paysage*. This suggestive phrase immediately calls to mind the undercurrent running below it: the popular expression *"vivre d'amour et d'eau fraîche"* (all you need is love) is perceptible here, though not given; while the phrase that continues it, "*ou L'impensé de la Raison*" (translated as *"or the Unthought-of in Reason"*) only confirms how it all escapes Reason. Further, the "continual *pairing[s]*" that make landscape in "Chinese language-thought" enable Jullien to "*conceive*" another form of landscape, in "*nondissociation*," "by undoing the very possibility of separation". (49)

How then, does this "continual *pairing*" not clog landscape? How can it, on the contrary, remain "a process of exchange and interaction" (50) and avoid that "bad lyricism" (50) over-subjectifying landscape? Jullien's recourse to the musical isotopy, which comes with the love attached to the physicality of landscape, gives an answer:

> The relation sounds a fundamental preliminary harmony. It does not produce a distinct sound so much as put us in tune with a coevality (the self—the world) that is just starting to reemerge. (43)

Throughout Jullien's chapter four, like in Anzaldúa's poetic manifesto, "*Canción de la diosa de la noche*," the sexual and the musical announce the coming out not so much of the new landscape as of a renewed landscape (hence the verb "reemerge" here)—which is also, at the very same time, that of the renewed human.

Conclusion

Both to Anzaldúa and to Jullien, who work *between* pre-existing cultures, "*with*" them, who draw the strength of their healed-healing landscape from them, the important question is not how to give birth, but how to resurrect. On the brink of the Sixth Extinction, knowing that the emergency is to join the ranks of the "compost-ists" (Haraway, 2015: 161), they theorize and rouse an accommodating and intimate landscape—which Wordsworth would certainly not have disowned, he who strove to achieve through his verse the "wedd[ing] to this goodly universe / In love and holy passion" of "the discerning intellect of Man". (Wordsworth 1814, 1949: 54-55, 53, 5).

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