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"NOW LET US SHIFT…" BOUNDARY CROSSING: THE MESTIZA AND CYBORGS IN WILD SEED AND LAGOON

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"Now Let Us Shift…" Boundary-Crossing: The Mestiza and Cyborgs in *Wild Seed* and *Lagoon*

"Now Let Us Shift …" Sınır Geçişi: *Wild Seed* ve *Lagoon*'da Mestiza ve Siborg

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ABSTRACT

Donna Haraway's "cyborg" and Gloria Anzaldua's "mestiza" are critical metaphors for individuals who embody multiple, oscillating, and contradictory social and subject positions. Haraway's and Anzaldua's striking metaphors and ideas become evidenced and effectively transposed in the science-fiction of Octavia Butler and Nnedi Okorafor. This study will explore two intersectional texts, Haraway's *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*: "Situated Knowledges" and "Cyborg Manifesto," and Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands/ La Frontera* and *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation* as the theoretical basis for analysis. It will present a critical analysis of Butler's *Wild Seed* and Okorafor's *Lagoon*, scrutinizing the crossings of different identifications of race, gender, and sexuality following borderlands theory. Butler and Okorafor challenge the opposing forms of identity politics in terms of gender, race, and sexuality, authorizing their characters by enacting unique connections of power and authenticity through queer, hybrid, and alien characters who can shapeshift into different forms. This study will identify and outline how Butler's and Okorafor's fiction grasps the potentialities apprehended in Haraway's "cyborg" and Anzaldua's "mestiza."

Keywords: Borderland Theory, Gloria Anzaldua, Donna Haraway, Cyborg Theory, Shapeshifting

ÖZET

Donna Haraway'in "siborg"u ve Gloria Anzaldua'nın "mestiza"sı, çoklu, salınımlı ve çelişkili toplumsal ve öznel konumlarını bünyesinde barındıran bireyler için kritik metaforlardır. Haraway'in ve Anzaldua'nın çarpıcı metaforları ve fikirleri, Octavia Butler ve Nnedi Okorafor'un bilimkurgusunda kanıtlanır ve etkili bir şekilde aktarılır. Bu tezde analiz için iki kesişen metin ele alınacak: Haraway'in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*: "Situated Knowledges" ve "Cyborg Manifesto" ve Gloria Anzaldua'nın *Borderlands/La Frontera* ve *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*. Butler'ın *Wild Seed* ve Okorafor's *Lagoon* romanlarının eleştirel bir analizini sunulacak ve borderlands teorisini takiben farklı ırk, cinsiyet ve cinsellik tanımlamalarının geçişlerini incelenecektir. Butler ve Okorafor, cinsiyet, ırk ve cinsellik açısından karşıt kimlik politikaları biçimlerine meydan okuyor ve farklı biçimlere dönüşebilen queer, melez ve yabancı karakterler aracılığıyla benzersiz güç ve özgünlük bağlantılarını canlandırarak karakterlerine yetki veriyor. Bu çalışma, Butler'ın ve Okorafor'un kurgusunun Haraway'in "siborg"u ve Anzaldua'nın "mestiza"sında yakalanan potansiyelleri nasıl kavradığını belirleyecek ve ana hatlarıyla belirleyecektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Borderland Teorisi, Gloria Anzaldua, Donna Haraway, Siborg Teorisi, Şekil Değiştirme

INTRODUCTION

> ‘Gimme the tea.... No geography.’ ‘No geography? Okay no geography. What about some history in your tea? Or some sociopolitico-No. That’s still geography.... I do believe my whole life’s geography.... I live in the North now. So the first question come to mind is North of what? Why, north of the South. So North exists because South does.[1]

The quote from Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* shows the liability of the notion of "border," which is a social phenomenon. Borders do not exist in nature but are created by people. It is more than a line but "a physical limit."[2] It shows the limits, the differences, where something begins and ends. There is nothing in nature that is bordered, but people create those arbitrary borders and differentiate everything differently by creating a division of "us" and "them." Thus, the "border" becomes not only a "physical limit" but also a "limit of ideas."[3] A category is defined strictly according to a definition expressed with words related to it. The words are differentiated, which creates binaries such as "between good and evil, true and false, white and black, male and female, dominant and subordinate."[4] The hierarchical thinking produces such differentiations, and the study of borders criticizes those binaries and power structures that benefit from the same borders. Borders are produced to reinforce a particular belief system or a culture, so it is a deliberate act: they aim to differentiate sexual, racial, social, or economic categories from each other, helping "a structure of power" to "materialize alongside it."[5] The "naturalization" of the "unnatural" borders defines who is to be privileged and who is to be oppressed: "[b]orders, in whatever form they make take, are always political."[6]

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[1] Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2007), 114.
[2] Dylan Winchock, and Jessica Elbert Decker, *Borderlands and Liminal Subjects: Transgressing the Limits in Philosophy and Literature* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 1.
[3] Ibid., 1.
[4] Ibid., 1.
[5] Ibid., 2.
[6] Ibid., 2.

The border has been studied focusing on geography: the borders between nations and cultures. Decker and Winchock gives examples of such analysis. For example, Josiah Heyman claims that "conceptual borders" rather than the geographical ones cannot reflect the political or economic problems at borders: the metaphorical use of the borders he believes transcends and de-confines the issues, which "results in a reproduction and reinforcement of the binary oppositions."[7] Although geographical analysis of the borders is significant, borders should be more complicated since "the fiction of cultures as discrete, object-like phenomena occupying discrete spaces becomes implausible for those who inhabit borderlands."[8] In other words, it is impossible to suggest a particular narrative or analysis on the borders because it is itself shifting and transformed by cultures. Borderlands are not fixed places where one stands between multiple influences. Therefore, the border subjects are involved in border crossing where "space and place can never be a 'given,' and […] the process of their socio-political construction must always be considered."[9] Border-crossers such as migrants of the transnational period show the interpretation of a specific nation illogical, so it problematizes the authority of any location defined by a single border. That problematization creates the "hybridized subject."[10] The creation of that subject shows that binaries are not valid anymore, and the power structures established on those binaries can be questioned. Accordingly, this study will follow an all-inclusive analysis that sees beyond different viewpoints and disciplines.

Gloria Anzaldua is a crucial theorist in analyzing the borders and the liminal subject. This study will utilize her ideas on the marginal subject, the “mestiza,” whose position is one of ambiguity. The "prohibited and forbidden" Chicana subject of Anzaldua questions the binary thinking enforced by hierarchical perspectives.[11] Her subject stands in between Mexican, Anglican, and Indian perspectives and is excluded by all. Anzaldua agrees with Victor Turner's claim that "liminal entities

[7] As cited in Winchock, and Decker, *Borderlands and Liminal Subjects*, 2.
[8] Ibid.,2.
[9] Ibid.,3.
[10] Ibid.,3.
[11] Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 3.

are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between."[12] However, she expands the idea that a liminal subject is not only excluded by a category but also has a shifting position where it can stand between the categories. Her subject gaining a consciousness (la faculdad) can navigate specific perspectives and show them as biased categories while "delegitimiz[ing] the authority of the impenetrable border."[13]

One of the significant theorists of borderlands theory is Chela Sandoval, who focuses on the US third world feminism where she takes metaphors of "mestiza" or "queer" to discuss how these metaphors embody multiple perspectives and worldviews. She states that the labels help to set "Borderlands" in a "shifting place of mobile codes and significations."[14] Her "differential consciousness" is similar to Anzaldua's "mestiza consciousness" and Donna Haraway's "cyborg identity." She restores voice to marginalized subjects by defining them in a context where they can change positions "between and among' ideological positionings."[15] It becomes a great survival strategy, and the subject is given the agency to shift viewpoints by seeing beyond the dominant narrative. Like Anzaldua and Haraway, her theorization shows intersectionality where gender, racial, and sexual categories intersect and can be analyzed together. Furthermore, it creates an awareness that one category always informs other categories.

The discussion of liminality and borders' or categories' relation to each other can be observed in Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*. He claims that meaning cannot be made without a stage of liminality where the binaries are "mobilized in the passage through a Third Space."[16] The intersecting binaries give themselves meaning and comprehend one another in relation. Hence, the notion of pure identity or an original unity is disregarded. Bhabha uses the political discourse of hybridity, mimicry, and third space to conceive coloniality. These ideas transcend the opposition between the self and the other. It instead pictures a liminal and interstitial

[12] As cited in Winchock, and Decker, *Borderlands and Liminal Subjects*, 4.
[13] Ibid.,5.
[14] Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed (*Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 33.
[15] Ibid.,45.
[16] Homi K Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge 2004), 53.

space where different cultures interact and create ambivalence. He claims that culture interacts and overlaps within a hybrid realm rather than existing in isolation. He refers to this area as the third enunciation space. Third Space can also be likened to Anzaldua's "nepantla," which emphasizes mutual interaction and transformation. Bhabha states that through "culture's hybridity," differences can be used to create ties among people where resistance becomes possible.[17] The term hybridity is employed in post-colonial discourse to describe the cross-cultural form produced by the interaction of the colonizer and the colonized. Bhabha uses "hybridity" to explain how culture and identity are created under oppressive and unfair colonialist circumstances. It results from the interactions between the colonizer and the colonized that is historically ingrained. He contends that the development of a collective culture depends on both the colonizer and the colonized. Therefore, the interconnectedness and mutual formation of the subjectivities of the colonizer and the colonized result in hybridity. According to Bhabha, this hybridity dismisses the idea of essentialist perspectives of identity and instead embraces complexities and multiplicities of identities. The study of Bhabha becomes crucial in the exploration of *Wild Seed* and *Lagoon*, where negotiation of identities by going beyond the self and the other is reflected through shapeshifting characters who embody third space with a constant transformation, going beyond the so-called categories of the colonizer and the colonized.

The creation of binaries and the violence it brings is discussed by theorists such as Irigaray and Derrida. They claim that understanding the subject is grounded on "patriarchal metaphysical systems," which enforce a "phallogocentric" view.[18] That understanding is biased and emphasizes specific categories over the others: "presence over absence" or "male identity has been constructed against female lack."[19] Psychoanalytic research also reinforces the so-called binary oppositions. They focus on male libidos like in Lacan's analysis, claiming "the phallus as master signifier and exiles women to a place outside of the Symbolic."[20] All those

[17] Ibid.,56.
[18] As cited in Winchock and Decker, *Borderlands and Liminal Subjects*, 10.
[19] Ibid.,10.
[20] Ibid.,10.

reinforcements participate in the naturalization of binary thinking, shown as inescapable. Binary thinking has its roots in Ancient Greek, which is revised in the Enlightenment period to discuss rationality. Some identities are shown to have the power to create a culture, and the phenomenon of "the universal subject" erases the differences and shows them as trivial. Moreover, the standard binary between mind and body has been emphasized, and marginalized groups such as women, animals, or minorities are shown to be unrelated to “reason” and thus “mind.” Thus, their agency is removed where the "logic of domination" gets the upper hand.[21] Donna Haraway and Gloria Anzaldua challenge the logic and heteronormative thinking which has enforced a hierarchical point of view to justify subordination. Haraway reveals that binaries reinforced by such hierarchical thinking is shown to be "leaky."[22] In *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, she claims that binary oppositions like between humans and animals, or humans and machines, physical and non-physical, can be reimagined and create possibilities to imagine the categories outside the simplified understanding of a mono-identity.[23]

This study covers two science fiction novels which is a genre referred to as the literature of "cognitive estrangement" by literary critic Darko Suvin.[24] Suvin borrows the idea of "estrangement" from Bertolt Brecht's writings: "A representation which estranges allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar."[25] Science fiction, according to Suvin, encompasses "the ideal extreme of an exact recreation of the author's empirical environment... [and] interest in a strange newness, a novum."[26] “Science fiction” is defined as "a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presences and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment."[27]

[21] Ibid.,11.
[22] Donna Haraway, *The Haraway Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 10.
[23] Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 2015).
[24] Darko Suvin, and Gerry Canavan, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2016).
[25] As cited in *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction, 6.*
[26] Ibid., 4.
[27] Ibid., 7-8.

Dysrecognition discussed by Suvin can be likened to Freud's unheimlich (uncanny), which appears to readers as both familiar and strange. That quality of speculative fiction enables the reader to question the status quo. It empowers the reader to uncover the ideology as they explore the imaginary character's interaction with the real world. Thus, it enables the readers to envisage alternatives to epistemology and ontology by utilizing dysrecognition and estrangement as a technique that can denaturalize what is seemed natural, abiding, and undeniable. In other words, science fiction makes it possible "to identify and question overarching, yet seemingly invisible, social systems and regulatory ideals, such as capitalism, patriarchy, heterosexuality, sex, gender, man, and woman."[28] The genre of science fiction appeals to the African American writers such as Butler and Okorafor since it authorizes them to "dramatize social inquiry, as providing a fictional mode in which cultural tendencies can be isolated and judged."[29]

The study will show the construction of intersecting notions such as gender and race—the metaphors of “the mestiza” and “cyborg” manifest in shapeshifting characters of *Lagoon* and *Wild Seed*. The analysis will reflect the characters' desire to create and recreate multiple and changing identities by depending on their personal experiences rather than an original or a master identity that has the power to make a fixed identity. The theories of Anzaldua and Haraway emphasize the multiple positions which focus on "difference." Similarly, the alien characters' multiple positionings in the novels will reflect the dislocation and fragmentation. However, the analysis of the metaphors of “cyborg” and “mestiza” will show that multiple subjectivities are empowering rather than weakening since it has the potential for resistance.

The study will focus on undoing the Western legacy, which constructs dualisms between “self” and “other,” creating a power relationship in which there is always a dominant one. This point of view reinforces the belief that differences should exist only to create boundaries with others; however, the focus will be on

[28] Catherine S. Ramírez, “Cyborg Feminism: The Science of Octavia E. Butler and Gloria Anzaldúa,” in *Reload: Rethinking Women + Cyberculture,* ed. Mary Flanagan (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002), 378.
[29] Ibid., 378.

seeing and recreating differences as not something deviant but as a part of the self that embodies difference. The ideas will correspond to Audre Lorde's declaration to meet at differences. She states the need to "recognize differences among women who are our equals, neither inferior nor superior, and devise the ways to use each other's differences to enrich our visions and our joint struggles."[30] Following this idea, this work aims to bring together and compare African American and Chicana authors. Both African Americans and Chicanas have been produced and seen as "abject" figures for centuries. The concepts of Haraway and Anzaldua fit with the two sci-fiction novels, *Lagoon* and *Wild Seed* which African American authors wrote. Anzaldua's ideas as a Chicana author point at similar oppressions that African American authors desired to portray. Thus, the texts and authors are "sisters" in my analysis of Cherrie Moraga's terms. Therefore, this thesis aims to possibly show "the pain and shock of difference, the joy of commonness, the exhilaration of meeting through incredible odds against it."[31]

In Butler and Okorafor's works, the "difference" is analyzed concerning multiple forms of oppression. They destabilize gender concerning race by exposing the very structure they have created. Thus, they can be shown to criticize the dominant structure of feminist writings where only the category of "woman" is the focus, and neither does it idealizes cultural traditions. The authors show that subjectivity is experienced personally. Butler's and Okorafor's narratives show the crisis of unresolved struggle in feminist writings. They show how a one-dimensional explanation of subjectivity counters the specific incidents in which the shapeshifting characters find themselves.

The focus will be on the symbolic boundaries which are used to negotiate multiple identities in terms of "difference." The boundaries are always seen in motion and shifting, making it difficult to talk about a stable identity. Hence, "boundary crossing" will be representative of the "difference." The boundaries discussed in this thesis will be both external and internal, which are performed on

[30] Audre Lorde, "Master's Tools Never Dismantle Master's House," In *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (New York: Crown Publishing, 1984), 27.
[31] Cherríe Moraga, and Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table/ Women of Color Press, 1984), xiv.

different points: differences in species such as humans, aliens, or animals which also transform into social categories. Both Okorafor and Butler weaken the boundaries of transgression and shapeshifting, emphasizing the negotiation, mutual understanding, and recognition of the other. Melzer's study of Butler's works goes hand in hand with Okorafor's:

> The embracing of difference, in which [the] two mechanisms (deconstruction of existing structures and acceptance of that which is not-I) are combined, makes a clear demarcation of "I" and not-I" (the dualism of "us" versus "them") impossible. It destabilizes the discursive opposition of identity and difference (the basis for dualisms in Western thought) and constitutes the main hopeful element in Butler's writings.[32]

Both Butler and Okorafor create characters beyond the boundaries in which they occupy an alien space embodying "difference" itself. For example, the shapeshifting characters in both novels focus on shapeshifting figures whose crossing is triggered by a state of emergency which positions them outside social norms where they become the figures to trigger transformation in other species.

The portrayal of difference has been shown in the figure of the "un-human being:"

> To be different, or "alien," is a significant if familiar cultural metaphor which marks the boundaries and limits of social identity. It allows difference to be marginalised and any dissonance to be smoothed away, thus confirming the dominance of the centre over the margins.[33]

Scholes and Rabkin differentiate the representation of non-human beings: "Un-human beings in science fiction take either two forms. Either they are constructs,

[32] Patricia Melzer, "The Alien in Us: Metaphors of Transgression in the Work of Octavia E. Butler," in *Alien Constructions: Science Fiction and Feminist Thought* (New York: University of Texas Press, 2006), 69.
[33] J Wolmark, *Aliens and Others: Science Fiction, Feminism and Postmodernism* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1994), 27.

artificial creations such as androids, robots, or golems, or they are products of some unearthly evolution – aliens."[34] The "un-human being" can be observed as a cyborg, or AI (Artificial Intelligence), or they are represented as the double representation of the hero in sci-fiction. These representations often show a relationship between the hero and the other, the alien. Jenny Wolmark in *Aliens and Others* explores the metaphor of alien in terms of gender and difference where she observes that the alien "enables difference to be constructed in terms of binary oppositions which reinforce relations of dominance and subordination."[35] However, the study will show that feminist science fiction should challenge the boundaries seen as antagonists by trying to create alternative representations or possibilities.

Moreover, both *Lagoon* and *Wild Seed* take un-human beings, which goes beyond a stable representation. By incorporating mythological figures such as Mami Wata, or fantastic trophies like “shapeshifting,” they help to change known sci-fiction notions and give them new meanings. They depict alien figures and figures who are hybrids between humans and aliens, which questions the very humanity of the so-called identity. The notion of universal "humanness" is criticized in both texts. Melzer states that "[a]s earlier studies of feminist science fiction demonstrate, feminist science fiction since the 1970s enhances the understanding of *man-made* technology (ideology)."[36] Therefore, both *Lagoon* and *Wild Seed* go against the tradition by creating shapeshifters who are the agents of change. They question the favored position of humans by also going beyond biological inscriptions on the body. Especially, *Wild Seed* shows not only physical but also psychological boundary transgression, whereas Anyanwu shows psychic un humanization.[37] Both novels engage in estrangement where they show violence in otherworldly environments to show humanity as other to itself.[38]

[34] As cited in Melzer. "The Alien in Us: Metaphors of Transgression in the Work of Octavia E. Butler," 70.
[35] Wolmark, *Aliens and Others: Science Fiction, Feminism and Postmodernism*, 2.
[36] Melzer, "The Alien in Us: Metaphors of Transgression in the Work of Octavia E. Butler," 71.
[37] Ibid., 71.
[38] Wolmark, *Aliens and Others: Science Fiction, Feminism and Postmodernism*, 40.

All the primary sources covered in this thesis will recover the “abject” figures in the Kristevan sense, including “cyborg,” “mestiza,” and “alien.” Julia Kristeva defines "abject" in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* as: "simply a frontier, a repulsive gift that the Other, having become alter ego, drops so that the "I" does not disappear in it but finds, in that sublime alienation, a forfeited existence."[39] According to Kristeva, the term "abject" refers to the dread resulting from the threat to the distinction between the self and the other. When the line between subject and object gets blurry, the border is the one in danger. As Kristeva states:

> If dung signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be, the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything. It is no longer I who expel, ‘I’ is expelled. The border has become an object.[40]

The shifting of borders and the confusion of the self and the other are explored in terms of the shapeshifting characters as well as the metaphors of “cyborg” and “the mestiza.” Also, Kristeva’s “subject-in-process” goes hand in hand with the theories of Anzaldua and Haraway: she conceives the subject as a process that assaults the so-called "unitary" subject in each stasis. She states: “The process dissolves the linguistic sign and its system (word, syntax), dissolves, that is, even the earliest and most solid guarantee of the unitary subject [...]"[41] “Cyborg” and “the mestiza” resist the conception of a unitary subject as being the abject. The “cyborg” has been seen by mainstream feminism as a threat since it also embodies technology and patriarchal norms. However, Haraway recovers the meaning of “cyborg” as something empowering, not delimiting for feminism's cause. Also, “mestiza,” a name for "atravesados" or the figure of “borderlands,” regains a new meaning. Anzaldua recovers “mestiza” as an empowering figure in resistance and shows its contradictions as valuable. Also, in *Lagoon* and *Wild Seed*, shapeshifting

[39] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982). 9.
[40] Ibid., 4.
[41] Julia Kristeva, "The Subject in Process", in *The Tel Quel Reader*, ed. Ffrench and Lack (New York: Routledge, 1998), 136.

characters Anyanwu and Ayodele are referred to as "witches," which leads the others to see them as abject figures. However, throughout their journey as the Anzalduan “spiritual activists,” they find empowerment in being witches and divert the negative connotation of being a witch.

The worlds presented in the novels are violent, and human nature, in general, is seen and reflected as violent. Doro's genetic engineering in *Wild Seed* and Father Oke and his team's violent attitudes in *Lagoon* can be analyzed as an example. Although Butler and Okorafor base their stories on fantastic worlds, the violent actions show the structure of hierarchies that Western cultures have nourished. Partiality and subjugation are present in these worlds. Also, inherent sexism and racism resulting from differences are parts of Western culture and its values, and they can be transmitted onto various meanings. Both Butler and Okorafor show that differences cannot be ignored in alien environments. Instead, they should be dealt with differently as not something to be naturalized but as something to be resolved because one's dealing with difference is what creates violence.

As discussed before, Butler and Okorafor engage in a “woman of color criticism” where they see the “difference,” not as something stable and stagnant. They are aware that constructed difference is a strategy used by the dominant culture to oppress the other as they use the difference to affirm their own identity. Western culture constructs differences where it will not "question the foundation of their beings and makings."[42] That is why it does not pursue the erasure of such difference rather, they "demand" and "assert" it.[43] The creation of a multicultural environment is celebrated just because it can be accommodated. This "pre-given" understanding of difference becomes political and presents itself as opposed to likeness or self. This view emphasizes the dualistic thinking of Western culture: "The differences made between entities comprehended as absolute presences – hence the notions *pure origin* and *true self* are an outgrowth of a dualistic system

[42] T. Trinh, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 88.
[43] Ibid., 89.

of thought."[44] Butler and Okorafor's narrative shows that binaries between the self and the other or a pre-given identity and the multiple positions are sabotaged. Instead of dualistic thinking, the notions of agency, survival, fluidity, and multiplicity of identities gain significance. Thus, the boundary becomes the place of negotiation where the identities are seen as adaptable and changeable.

Furthermore, the idea of shifting boundaries and relationality can help to understand the metaphors of "mestiza" and "cyborg." "Mestiza" is created as a new consciousness resulting from contradictory identities. "Cyborg" emerges with political connotations where it embodies conflicting notions created by capitalism or the oppositions of nature and culture. Also, in Rosi Braidotti's "nomadic subject," displacements express similar flexibility and freedom of movement:

> The nomadic subject functions as a relay team: s/he connects, circulates, moves on; s/he does not form identifications but keeps on coming back at regular intervals. […] Identity is retrospective; representing it entails that we can draw accurate maps, indeed, but only of where we have already been and consequently no longer are. Nomadic cartographies need to be redrafted constantly.[45]

The metaphors share that identity formation is not stable but transforming and never-ending. These metaphors can be traced in *Lagoon* and *Wild Seed*, where the "logic of purity" is undermined.[46]

Chapter One will scrutinize two metaphors: "cyborg" and the "mestiza." Donna Haraway's "cyborg" will be examined under the notions of agency and dominance. First, the ideas presented in "Situated Knowledges" will be outlined better to understand her views in "A Cyborg Manifesto." Butler's criticism and re-elaboration of objectivity with her criticism of former feminist discourse will be studied. Also, her contradictory views on the subject will be outlined, which is always made and in process. Subsequently, the thesis will elaborate on her claim

[44] Trinh, *Woman, Native, Other*, 94.
[45] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 35.
[46] As cited in Melzer, "The Alien in Us," 89.

that the subject and object's negotiation can give the subject agency and freedom. Her theorization on the subject and agency will then be explored in the metaphor of "cyborg," which also can be likened to the "women of color subject" in its embodiment of "partial identities and contradictory standpoints."[47]

The "cyborg identity" presents a position but also a displacement. The embodiment of the subject is multiple because it consists of different and maybe contradictory positions such as race, gender, sexuality, class, likewise. The "cyborg identity" allows the subject to view itself with the other and gains a consciousness similar to "the mestiza consciousness," where it can exist in antagonistic places. None of the places are favored because relationality is recognized. Haraway likens the “cyborg identity” to the “women of color” because they also stand outside a particular "essence" and involves in negation: they [refuse] a regular membership in the categories of race, sex, or class."[48] Although she gives examples from the “women of color,” not only they but the post-modern subject is placed in multiple and oscillating subject positions as Haraway states: "We are all chimeras, the theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, *we are cyborgs.*"[49] Thus, she values the notions of "otherness, difference, and specificity" as the components of the new subject.[50] Haraway incorporates the ideas of theorists such as Norma Alarcon who also gives examples from the “women of color” inhabiting "a site of multiple voicings."[51] Also, she is influenced by Chela Sandoval's "differential consciousness" where she defines it as "a tactical subjectivity with the capacity to recenter depending upon the kinds of oppressions to be confronted."[52] Hence, the “cyborg” having multiple voicings undermines and exploits "the logic of appropriation."[53]

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[47] Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 154.
[48] Ibid., 18.
[49] Ibid., 4.
[50] Ibid., 19.
[51] Norma Alarcón, “The Theoretical Subjects of 'This Bridge Called My Back and Anglo-American Feminism,"' in *Criticism in the Borderlands. Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture and Ideology*, ed. Hector Calderón José David Saldiva (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 38.
[52] Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 58.
[53] Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto,” 157.

Moreover, Haraway questions the notion of "embodiment" by moving to "disembodiment." She states: "Feminist embodiment … is not about a fixed location in a reified body, female or otherwise, but about nodes in fields, inflections in orientations, and responsibility for the difference in material-semiotic fields of meaning."[54] The criticism of the body as not something biological will be applied to the shapeshifting characters as their ability ideally implies the body's materiality and discursive quality.

In Chapter One, following the discussion on Haraway, an analysis of Anzaldua's *Borderlands*, which focuses on metaphors such as "the mestiza," will be done. "Mestiza," like "cyborg," is an "abject" figure, a displaced one without a home. She stands on the border, a conflicted place where she is neither Anglican, Mexican nor Indian. She is in the middle of a border war. "Mestiza" is banned from reality and existence; she can be likened to a schizoid. Therefore, she embodies a form of "impure" resistance to the "logic of purity."[55] "Mestiza" similar to "cyborg" cannot "hold concepts or ideas in rigid boundaries."[56] She embodies the geographical border by incorporating an emotional dimension. She is like the border itself, multi-layered and ambiguous. Mestiza's resistance or her "spiritual activism," where she gains agency with the knowledge or consciousness after incorporating ambiguous positions in terms of race, gender, or class, will be discussed. Mestiza's aim becomes clear: to teach others that transformation starts within that "[t]he struggle is inner."[57] As Anzaldua states: "Awareness of our situation must come before inner changes, which come before changes in society. Nothing happens in the "real" world unless it happens in the image in our heads."[58]

Chapter Two will study *Lagoon* and *Wild Seed* in terms of the border theory focusing on the metaphors of "cyborg" and "mestiza." In *Wild Seed*, the part will focus on the characters of Doro and Anyanwu, who represent different and also similar points. The characters will be compared in terms of their community-

[54] Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," In *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 195.
[55] As cited in Melzer, "The Alien in Us," 91.
[56] Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1989), 79.
[57] Ibid., 87.
[58] Ibid., 87.

building, where Doro represents the “benevolent cyborg” involved in genetic engineering and Anyanwu represents the “beneficial cyborg” involved in the negotiation of multiple categories. Their shapeshifting skills will be compared in terms of the subject's agency. Anyanwu's adaptability and survival instincts as an abject figure show that she stands beyond and among the colonizer and the colonized, nature and culture, male and female, mind and body. Anyanwu will be shown to reflect Anzaldua's “mestiza” or “nagual,” who gains a certain consciousness that is influential in changing herself and Doro and others. She will be studied as a spiritual activist who represents the difference, negotiation, community building, education, and constant transformation.

Also, in *Lagoon*, shapeshifting and alien characters such as Adaora and Ayodele will be discussed concerning the "cyborg" and "mestiza." The key focus points will be on the characters' liminality and adaptation skills where they, like Anyanwu, represent change, negotiation, and difference. Lagos will be analyzed as a multicultural place representing the possibility of change envisioned by Anzaldua. Also, the character's alienness and shapeshifting into animal forms are similar to Anyanwu's and reflect that the “shapeshifting” will the vulnerable categories such as between human and alien, nature and culture, science and religion, and body and mind. Ayodele, like Anyanwu, will be analyzed in terms of a "nagual" who participates in "spiritual activism" where she pursues "Conocimiento" to create a change in others. She represents “difference” as she erases the restrictive boundaries that create "us" and "them" and instead involves creating a community where there is no leader but only knowledge sharing.

CHAPTER ONE
DO BORDERS MATTER? DONNA HARAWAY'S CYBORG MANIFESTO AND GLORIA ANZALDUA'S BORDERLANDS/ LA FRONTERA

1.1. HARAWAY'S SITUATED KNOWLEDGES AND THE CYBORG

In "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" and "A Cyborg Manifesto" Haraway pushes against the binaries that circulate science and technology discourse, but this does not mean that she rejects these concepts. Instead, she goes against the constructivist and relativist approaches to science, knowledge, and technology. Instead, she claims that objectivity can be understood through a specific "vision."

Her essay "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," published in 1988, introduces the term "situated knowledges." She puts forward this idea in the 1980s United States, which she defines as the "scientific and technological, late-industrial, militarized, racist and male-dominant."[59] Another problem she observes is feminism, which attempts to reinforce the binarism between objectivity and subjectivity and merely "end[s] up with one more excuse for not learning any post-Newtonian physics and one more reason to drop the old feminist self-help practices of repairing our own cars."[60] Feminist desires to hold on to constructivism where language and power conflicts can never be separated from truth and objectivity. While they also want to depend on an empiricist point of view in which scientific knowledge is condemned for its male bias. Thus, the feminist point of view is not consistent since it desires the two angles, which are "an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects […], and a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a 'real' world"[61] Hence, feminism reinforces relativism where they are "nowhere while claiming to be everywhere."[62] Therefore, empiricism supports the

[59] Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 188.
[60] Ibid., 188.
[61] Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 187.
[62] Ibid., 191.

belief that there is no need to be anywhere while claiming to be everywhere. The two feminist notions discussed earlier cannot observe that knowledges are always situated, and they are partial. Hence, she proposes "situated knowledges" to pose an alternative to totalizing means of knowledge. She emphasizes the need to "switch metaphors" because she believes it is impossible to "[hold] on both ends of a pole."[63] The idea that Haraway criticizes feminism is that it does not allow for active participation because its view is a totalizing one that focuses on exclusion. Thus, by embracing the latter, she does not follow transcendent objectivity, which ignores negotiation. Instead, she claims certain objectivity that values networks, community, and partial knowledge. Every point of view comes from somewhere, and it is always situated. Haraway goes beyond the belief that the techno-culture allows people to be everywhere, which she claims to be "a god trick:" "[L]ike the god-trick, this eye fucks the world to make techno-monsters."[64] She goes against the belief that Vision is transcendent by claiming that knowledge is specific. She claims that "only partial perspective promises objective vision."[65]

To explain "situated knowledges" she puts forward the notion of "vision" which is "a doctrine of embodied objectivity that accommodates paradoxical and critical feminist science projects."[66] As discussed earlier, Haraway challenges the common-sense view on objectivity by putting forward the notions of partiality and situatedness. Haraway acknowledges that people always see other people or situations from their point of view, which is shaped by their "partial perspective." Haraway takes the notion of partiality as something positive instead of a narrow term just because they do not understand everything. Their partiality or specificity is positive because it is detailed and informational. Because they depart from the common-sense knowledge by being detailed, they are also unexpected. Therefore, "partial connections," according to Haraway, are more valuable than an all-knowing one. She uses metaphors such as "webs" and "maps" to describe such connections.[67]

[63] Ibid., 188
[64] Ibid., 189.
[65] Ibid., 190.
[66] Ibid., 188.
[67] Ibid., 191.

She claims a certain "Feminist objectivity," which "is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see."[68] According to Haraway's theorization, there is no winner or loser in a game; instead, everybody builds their understanding and passes their story on to other people by creating connections and “webs” between them. These people can also transform the latter knowledge. Haraway states:

> [L]ocal knowledges have also to be in tension with the productive structurings that force unequal translations and exchanges - material and semiotic - within the webs of knowledge and power. Webs can have the property of being systematic, even centrally structured global systems with deep filaments and tenacious tendrils into time, space, and consciousness, which are the dimensions of world history. Feminist accountability requires a knowledge tuned to resonance, not to dichotomy. Gender is a field of structured and structuring difference. The tones of extreme localization, the intimately personal and individualized body, vibrate in the same field with global high-tension emissions. Feminist embodiment, then, is not about fixed location in a reified body, female or otherwise, but about nodes in fields, inflections in orientations, and responsibility for the difference in material-semiotic fields of meaning. Embodiment is a significant prosthesis; objectivity cannot be about fixed Vision when what counts as an object is precisely what world history turns out to be about.[69]

Thus, “situated knowledges” rejects the dichotomies; rather, it links local and global phenomena. What is local and global is not defined by their differences but by the result of the connections made between them. The god trick Anzaldua describes is "a perverse capacity […] to distance the knowing subject from everybody and everything in the interests of unfettered power."[70] Without falling into the trap of "the god trick," situated knowledges do not take one notion as the reason for all

[68] Ibid., 190.
[69] Ibid., 195.
[70] Ibid., 188.

opinions. It emphasizes "a more adequate, richer, better account of a world, in order to live in it well and in critical, reflexive relation to our own as well as others' practices of domination and the unequal parts of privilege and oppression that make up all positions."[71] The "conquering gaze" of "the god trick" tries to out master and materialize what is sees defining which bodies have the meaning. However, the "vision" cannot be defined by anything since it escapes representation. Haraway also emphasizes the "violence" that "the vision" has: "Vision is always a question of the power to see – and perhaps of the violence implicit in our visualizing practices. With whose blood were my eyes crafted?"[72] Haraway asks valuable questions that are crucial in analyzing the novels and the discussion of Anzaldua: "How to see? Where to see from? What limits to Vision? What to see for? Whom to see with? Who gets to have more than one point of view? Who gets blinded? Who wears blinders? Who interprets the visual field? What other sensory powers do we wish to cultivate besides Vision?"[73]

Moreover, as explained above, “Vision” is not a quick way of knowing since it necessitates technology such as a camera, microscope, or body to see. A body or any of these technological devices can act as a mirror that reflects things as what they are. “Vision” acts as diffusion since it does not produce something that already exists, but it invigorates. Haraway states:

> Splitting, not being, is the select image for feminist epistemologies of scientific knowledge. "Splitting" in this context should be about heterogeneous multiplicities that are simultaneously salient and incapable of being squashed into isomorphic slots or cumulative lists. This geometry pertains within and among subjects. Subjectivity is multidimensional; so, therefore, is Vision.[74]

[71] Ibid., 187.
[72] Ibid., 192.
[73] Ibid., 194.
[74] Ibid., 193.

The making of these new "geometries" makes it possible for the emergence of "promising monsters." “Vision” is not about the world's intrusion on the subjects, but it is about the subjects as embodied beings and knowers of the world itself, and they have the power to co-create the world they live in. Thus, Haraway questions the subject as the knower and the known object. Hence, she makes it possible to incorporate the subject and the object.

In her words, Haraway believes in the multiplicity and complexity of the self, "the split and contradictory self,” since it puts one into an accountable position, which makes it possible to cross-examine positions.[75] She claims, "Feminist accountability requires a knowledge tuned to resonance, not dichotomy…Feminist embodiment, then, is not about fixed location in a reified body, female or otherwise, but about nodes in fields, inflections in orientations, and responsibility for the difference in material-semiotic fields of meaning."[76] Haraway critiques science's fixation on a knowable object by stating:

> [A]n object of knowledge is finally itself only matter for the seminal power, the act, of the knower. Here, the object both guarantees and refreshes the power of the knower, but any status as agent in the productions of knowledge must be denied the object. It—the words—must, in short, be objectified as a thing, not as an agent; it must be matter for the self-formation of the only social being in the production of knowledge, the human knower.[77]

The objects are merely seen as something to be manipulated and used for everyday purposes by men. However, Haraway, a feminist biologist, and a historian was interested in bodies as the objects of the scientific argument. Even the biological bodies can be questioned as something to be uncovered and detected. The conceptions of biological bodies are merely manipulated by the partial knowledges that Haraway discusses. These bodies are also compelling in the sense that they can

[75] Ibid., 193.
[76] Ibid., 194-5.
[77] Ibid., 197-8.

participate in creating the other. Therefore, Haraway considers the scientific argument "active" and "meaning-generating."[78] Thus, objects are not passive notions of being investigated by men, but rather they are active subjects which Haraway calls as being the "actors."[79] Haraway states, "The codes of the world are not still, waiting only to be read. The world is not raw material for humanization; […] the world encountered in knowledge projects is an active entity."[80] The previous conception of the object of knowledge makes it possible for the subjects' enslavement, colonization, and domination. Hence, Haraway's conception of the object aims to erase the mastery and domination. Haraway states that if the object is always spoken for, it emphasizes the difference between passive and active. Haraway gives examples of the Earth, the foetus, the jaguar, and the rainforest in discussing the representation. For example, she takes the relationship between the foetus and the pregnant woman. She asks: "Who speaks for the fetus?" The answer is, anybody but the pregnant woman."[81] She writes about the ignoration of the most intimate ones spoken for. The actors understood the actors who have to be cared for as sinister. In need of representation, the pregnant woman is put in an opposing atmosphere instead of a caring one. Thus, Haraway emphasizes articulation rather than possession of a passive object since she believes it defines a social relationship. She describes the world with "a coding trickster" metaphor where people have to decode and learn to counter such coding.[82] Haraway articulates the need to show the impossibility of representation in terms of nature since one cannot possess it. She emphasizes the need to let go of a transcendent, all-knowing, and autonomous subject and embrace the activity of the object and subject. However, she does not mean to throw away the notion of the subject as non-existent; instead, she maintains it. She utilizes the new form of subject in the possible creation of "non-isomorphic subjects," which was impossible to create from the "satiated eye of the master

[78] Ibid., 200.
[79] Ibid., 207.
[80] Ibid., 198.
[81] Haraway, *Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 87.
[82] Ibid., 68.

subject."[83] The subject's new form resembles the body that is simultaneously constructed: "The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly."[84] The subject is contradictory because it is fluid in its courage to take a different stance. The theorization of the knowing subject is crucial in the analysis of this thesis because it takes the subject with various shifting boundaries where the objects of knowledge gain the freedom of articulation even though they remain ambiguous and problematic. As Haraway states:

> [B]odies as objects of knowledge are material-semiotic nodes. Their boundaries materialize in social interaction. Boundaries are drawn by mapping practices; 'objects' do not pre-exist as such. Objects are boundary projects. But boundaries shift from within; boundaries are very tricky. What boundaries provisionally contain remains generative, productive of meanings and bodies. Siting (sighting) boundaries is a risky practice.[85]

The spoken for and marginalized ones are at the center of Haraway's discussion. She emphasizes the critical stance of these subjects outside of the transcendent and all-knowing knowledge because they stand outside of the conceptions. They symbolize fluidity and freedom of motion and activity. She calls the marginalized voices "in appropriated others," which promises the creation of non-unitary subjectivity. Therefore, she agrees with the discussions surrounding critical subjectivity, such as Sandoval's "oppositional consciousness." Haraway values the decoding of "what counts as 'woman' within and outside 'feminism'" Haraway not only focuses on gender but also takes different kinds of alterity as her focus. She defines "an inappropriated other" who shows a "critical, deconstructive relationality, in a diffracting rather than reflecting (ratio)natility."[86]

[83] Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 192.
[84] Ibid., 193.
[85] Ibid., 208.
[86] Haraway, *Promises of Monsters,* 69.

Haraway's "promising monsters" are not only marginalized people but also creatures who are not human at all. Hence, the subject will aim to view the world from the perspective of numerous limitless identities where the subjects can find themselves in contradictory positions, such as an anti-racist anglo man or a feminist man. Thus, what Haraway talks about is the co-generation of hybrid and specific identities. This perspective can be misleading if viewed from a Western point of view which defines the subject according to the "property in the self" since it does "not have agency."[87] Therefore, feminists also fall into the same trap since they feel the need to have a gendered subject to having the agency. She believes in the possibility of a coherent and, at the same time, dissolved gender which does not lose its agency. Peta Hinton writes about the "problem of difference" where she claims: "reconfiguring of subjectivity disrupts the capacity to secure the identity of woman in any straightforward manner, while at the same time it requires something of this identity in order to ground its political aspirations."[88] Thus, Haraway's theory in that sense embodies both positioning and displacement at the same time where she also claims: "an identity which assumes its place, its ability to be located, is still made available in her argument at precisely the same time as its claim to self-presence is displaced. The privilege of identity is not removed, but neither can it be assumed."[89] She values the contradictory sense of gender and the knower since she believes, "'Being' does not ground knowledge, at least not until 'being' has been made into a strategic, built site generating interrogation, not identification."[90] In another way, Haraway engages in identity politics where she claims to destabilize the same identities to create a dynamic one.

Before discussing Haraway's "cyborg," it is crucial to examine the idea's foundation. What science aims to make possible is to generate meaning to a meaningless cosmos where the subjects aim to find the origin, but also it has the

[87] Haraway, *Promises of Monsters,* 117.
[88] Peta Hinton, "'Situated Knowledges' and New Materialism(s): Rethinking a Politics of Location," *Women: A Cultural Review* 25, no. 1 (2014): 102.
[89] Ibid., 109.
[90] Joseph Schneider, "Science as Stories of Nature: The Case of Primatology," in *Donna Haraway: Live Theory* (London: Continuum, 2005), 44-45.

passion for getting control of the space. For this purpose, "chimponaut," a combination of animal and machine, has been used. Thus, the image of "chimponaut" can be seen as a “cyborg.” However, Haraway continues her argument on “cyborg.” She sees the possibility of creations such as cyborgs as a mere fantasy since it is now a powerful social and scientific reality.[91] Haraway states that "cyborg" blurs boundaries between animals and humans or machines and organisms. In addition, she does not see it as something that can harm humans. On the contrary, she finds the possibility of such hybrid creations exciting since it allows humans to be in touch with others who are seen as different and not kins. She expresses her kinship with a mouse: "I am joined in a family romance with the (onco)mice of all species and (female)men of all genders in the worlds of technoscience […] I need my sibling species to get me through this life story; our bodies share substance; we are kin."[92] Haraway values cyborgs since she believes the possibility that “cyborg” metaphor can erase domination and mastery that has been ruining the entire nation where sexual and racial differences are seen as something that can be embraced.

By going against the notions of science and technology as the antagonist to the feminist cause, Haraway takes “cyborg” as a leading image in creating an embodied subjectivity. “Cyborg” destabilizes the oppositions created by the dominant discourse such as culture and nature, physical and nonphysical, animal and human or machine and organism. The distinction between nature and culture is mainly assigned to "monkeys,” “aliens” and “women," who are seen as the figures of a challenge to scientific knowledge. "A Cyborg Manifesto" encourages these figures to challenge scientific knowledge by encouraging them not to hide their divergent sides. She associates cyborg with monstrosity because "monster" comes from the word "demonstrate," which is to "signify."[93] Thus, they are also responsible for showing that what is deemed normal is constructed. “Cyborg”

[91] Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto,” 149.
[92] Donna Haraway, *Modest Witness Second Millennium. FemaleMan Meets OncoMouse: Feminism and Technoscience* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 119.
[93] Haraway. *The Haraway Reader*, 117.

makes all the meanings impossible since it embodies contradictory boundaries such as sex and race.

Although she sees cyborgs as a leading image in the destruction of domination narratives, she also is aware of their hostile nature where she gives examples from "bomb" or "chip."[94] She is highly conscious of technological developments' ambiguous nature. Similar to the discussion on technoscience, she claims that her text is made up of ambiguity and contradiction. She states that "A Cyborg Manifesto" includes "contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes, even dialectically, [...] the tension of holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessary and true."[95] Her text is ironic and full of play with a touch of humor. “Cyborg” goes against the norms of an ideal dialogue instead of what scientific knowledge claims. It is "a powerful heteroglossia."[96] Through her ambiguous text, she defines “cyborg writing” by stating: "Cyborg writing is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other."[97]

“Cyborg” is a provocative and troublesome figure who reinforces extraordinary relationships. She is outside of humanity and cannot be traced back to its roots, and it does not desire paradise, nor is it afraid of hell. It cannot be defined by psychoanalysis or philosophy since she escapes all the notions, nor can she have a sexual identity. “Cyborg” is androgynous; however, Haraway sometimes claims she is “a bad girl” or “a polychromatic girl.”[98] “Cyborg” is apolitical, although she goes against the racist and sexist arguments. She does not create a victim, nor it also claims a common identity. She creates associations based not on

[94] Haraway, *The Haraway Reader*, 242.
[95] Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto,” 149.
[96] Ibid., 84.
[97] Ibid., 68.
[98] Constance Penley, Andrew Ross and Donna Haraway “Cyborgs at Large: Interview with Donna Haraway,” *Social Text* 25, no. 26 (1990): 23.

"by blood but by choice, the appeal of one chemical, nuclear group for another, avidity."[99] So her coalitions are temporary.

Social categories such as sex and race are seen outside scientific exploration, where they are dismissed as insignificant. Haraway criticizes dominant feminist discourse where she claims that they also, by having an anti-racist stance join the reinforcement of dismissing those social categories. Haraway's emphasis on "diffraction", which is "the non-innocent, complexly erotic practice of making a difference in the world, rather than displacing the same elsewhere," counters any fixed definitions since everything is open to dispute and dislocation.[100] Situated knowledges are definitive of a more tentative and unforeseen domain since they are "in flux and therefore situated knowledges are knowledges which are not built from some fixed standpoint but are integrated into the processes which are structuring and restructuring the world."[101] Situated knowledges include irony and ambiguity "that do not resolve into larger wholes, even dialectically, about the tension of holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessary and true."[102]

Haraway completed "A Cyborg Manifesto" in 1986 and published it in 1991. Haraway criticized radical feminists, which led a popular movement in the 1970s and 1980s USA and Europe. She posits her essay as an "ironic" and a "political myth," which goes hand in hand with materialism and feminism. Subsequently, she moves on to the definition of a "cyborg," which is defined in several ways as it is not detectable. She defines it as being a "cybernetic organism," "a hybrid of machine and organism," "a creature of lived social reality," and a "creature of fiction."[103] "Cyborg" is a significant metaphor since, according to Haraway, it has helped transform women's experiences. Feminists have used the term "women's

[99] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 155.
[100] Donna Haraway, "A Game of Cat's Cradle: Science Studies, Feminist Theory, Cultural Studies," *Configurations* 2, no.1 (1994): 63.

[101] David Harvey and Donna Haraway, "Nature, Politics, and Possibilities: A Debate and Discussion with David Harvey and Donna Haraway," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 13, no. 5 (1995): 508.
[102] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 149.
[103] Ibid., 150.

experience" to talk about a "fiction and a fact of the most crucial, political kind."[104] According to Haraway, "lived social reality" and "fiction" defines each other, and there is no difference between them.[105]

"Cyborg" is undefinable, and its definition leads to a "border war," which is acted on as an "optical illusion."[106] Haraway states: "The cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women's experience in the late twentieth century. That is a struggle over life and death, but the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion."[107] To take "cyborg" as a figure that can only exist in the future is problematic because in modern life people can see them everywhere such as "modern medicine," "reproduction," likewise. Thus, Haraway states that "we are cyborgs." She writes, "By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs."[108] Generally, cyborgs and technology in general, as discussed above, are linked to oppressive structures such as the racist and patriarchal capitalism also the mastery over nature by creating a dichotomy between culture and nature. However, Haraway argues that the binaries can exist together since "cyborg" takes "pleasure in the confusion of binaries," and people need to take "responsibility in [the] construction" of that same boundary.[109] The "cyborg" goes beyond reproduction and gender, "outside gender." Haraway claims:

> Unlike the hopes of Frankenstein's monster, the cyborg does not expect its father to save it through a restoration of the garden, i.e., through the fabrication of a heterosexual mate, through its completion in a finished whole, a city and cosmos. The cyborg does not dream of community on the model of the organic family, this time without the Oedipal project. The

[104] Ibid., 149.
[105] Ibid., 150.
[106] Ibid., 150.
[107] Ibid., 150.
[108] Ibid., 150
[109] Ibid., 150.

> cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust.[110]

Thus, "cyborg" stands beyond the fears that have haunted feminism for a long time. "Cyborg" exceeds the master and slave narrative since it does not need a master to exist. Although "cyborg" does not belong to a family, it has a history, and it is linked to the military. It tries to end the domination of the West over nature, although "cyborg" is also not innocent. Cyborgs cannot be trusted because they are tied to "militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism," This does not necessarily mean something wrong since it is not loyal to its roots.[111]

Haraway discusses the border crossings she has observed between humans and animals and humans and machines. The crossings between humans and animals have occurred because of pollution and experimentation. The crossing between humans and machines has happened when machines have become more autonomous and where there is not much difference between what is "natural" and what is "artificial." Haraway states: "Late-twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert."[112] Besides, there is another crossing that happened between the "physical" and "nonphysical" where she discusses the small advancements such as microchips which creates a problem for the modern world.

Haraway lists these border crossings to encourage social feminists to take responsibility in the negotiation of technology and nature since returning to nature is impossible. She also understands the feminist's motivation to turn against technology because they have been exploited by the system for a very long time. Haraway encourages them to face "the belly of the monster."[113] They should not be

[110] Ibid., 151.
[111] Ibid., 151.
[112] Ibid., 152.
[113]Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 188.

afraid to negotiate with animals and machines: "a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints."[114] Thus, the crucial point relevant to this thesis discussed by Haraway is that without adopting a particular perspective, we should be able to float freely in a world of contradictory viewpoints. Neither technology nor nature should be rejected since "[t]he political struggle is to see from both perspectives at once because each reveal both dominations and possibilities unimaginable from the other vantage point. Single vision produces worse illusions than double vision or many-headed monsters."[115]

In Part Two, Haraway starts by stating "I do not know of any other time in History […] when there was greater need for political unity to confront effectively the dominations of 'race', 'gender', 'sexuality', and 'class'"[116] She states the need to unite in affinity politics rather than pursue identity politics, which emphasizes an "essential woman." Haraway finds essentialism dangerous. Instead, Haraway states that feminists can follow coalitions using identity as a political category. Hence, she gives examples from "women of color" who can pursue affinity politics. Quoting from Sandoval's "oppositional consciousness", Haraway states that "women of color" cannot be essentialized: there is "the lack of any essential criterion for identifying who is a woman of colour."[117] Haraway analyses them in line with cyborg politics and observes that affinity is closely related to "otherness, difference, and specifity" and they can "[construct] a kind of postmodernist identity out of otherness and difference."[118] Additionally, Haraway criticizes Marx and MacKinnon, especially MacKinnon's "essential woman" where he observes dismissive attitude on the power of race. She criticizes that the actual lives of women are not given attention. Similarly, in the era of Informatics, there is a tendency to see things as "interconnected" rather than having essential components.

[114] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 154.
[115] Ibid., 154.
[116] Ibid., 157.
[117] Ibid., 156.
[118] Ibid., 155.

She states that nature and culture exist together: "the objects on the right-hand side cannot be coded as 'natural,' a realization that subverts naturalistic coding for the left-hand side as well."[119] Following the erasure of the dichotomies such as nature and culture, Haraway claims that changes not only happen in natural sciences but also in social sciences: labels cannot be used to describe any nation as civilized or non-civilized.

Moreover, crucial in analyzing the novels in this thesis, Haraway lists some sci-fiction writers and takes them as "theorists for cyborgs."[120] One of these writers she mentions is Octavia Butler. She lists these writers to talk about "what it means to be embodied in high-tech worlds."[121] She mentions the strategies that women of color writers pursue to create cyborg mythologies and the creation of "monstrous selves" in sci-fiction.[122] She states that writing for "women of color" both signified their assimilation and resistance to systems of oppression. She takes "literacy" as something special for "women of color." They ruin the dominant language while being ruined by it. She states:

> Cyborg writing must not be about the Fall, the imagination of a once-upon-a-time wholeness before language, before writing, before Man. Cyborg writing is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other.[123]

By associating "women of color" with "cyborgs", she sees writing as a cyborg technology. She sees "women of color" writing as a transformation rather than just seeing it as "deconstruction." She gives examples from Cherrie Moraga and the transformative quality of her text: "Women of color have transformed [a mother like Malinche] from the evil mother of masculinist fear into the originally literate

[119] Ibid., 162.
[120] Ibid., 173.
[121] Ibid, 173.
[122] Ibid., 173.
[123] Ibid., 175.

mother who teaches survival. This is not just literary deconstruction, but liminal transformation."[124] Transformations will be significant in analyzing the shapeshifter characters whose shapeshifting will be based on survival. Likewise, she writes about certain dualisms which have been in discussion in the Western tradition. These dualisms are all established to objectify and set apart those who have been seen as the other. The other has the task of reflecting the self, which cannot be dominated. In Haraway's words:

> The self is the One who is not dominated, who knows that by the service of the other; the other is the one who holds the future, who knows that by the experience of domination, which gives the lie to the autonomy of the self. To be One is to be autonomous, to be powerful, to be God; but to be One is to be an illusion, and so to be involved in a dialectic of apocalypse with the other. Yet to be other is to be multiple, without clear boundary, frayed, insubstantial. One is too few, but two are too many.[125]

The new technological world values multiplicity and challenges such dualisms, since everything consists of "cyborgs, hybrids, mosaics, chimeras."[126]

1.2. ANZALDUA'S BORDERLANDS AND THE MESTIZA

"The U.S-Mexican border es una herida abierta where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country — a border culture"[127] writes Gloria Anzaldúa in the first chapter of *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Anzaldúa's text generated a powerful voice in both the world of literature and feminism, and postcolonial thought. The text reflects on the interrelations between gender, body, and race with geographic border areas. As can be understood by the title, the use of borders is intentional and indicates a political action. The study goes beyond the geographical and linguistic boundaries, exceeding the definition of any specific

[124] Ibid., 177.
[125] Ibid., 177.
[126] Ibid., 177.
[127] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 3.

genre, where it engages in the questioning of sexual and national identities. It studies the diversity of border subjects without romanticizing them by understanding their essential instability. Therefore, the "border" becomes an allegory of the lack of a stable identity and the endorsement of an actual social and historical situation of marginalization and oppression. However, in the text, the "border" is transformed and adapted into a political tool, creating social transformation.

Born in South Texas to a humble farming family, the Chicana writer's life was marked by illness, poverty, and immigration. In her writings, pain and misery are reflected, which leave traces and lacerating marks on her vulnerable body. Too dark and Indian, as fragile as macho and not very feminine.[128] Anzaldua, the dark one, blamed her fragile health on the fumigations she had suffered as a child when the planes of the Yankee multinationals dropped their poison on the Mexican day laborers who worked the fields. It is no coincidence that the precariousness of her being is reflected in writing, in a corpo-politics arising from the entrails, from that wounded and torn body of the Third World woman. Organic writing, Anzaldua calls the living text, the words of a "Beast" that becomes the weapon for survival.

Anzaldua begins her journey, renouncing any safe place of enunciation. She situates herself in the difference, in the diaspora, even in betrayal as a critical tool: neither loyal to her race, or culture, as the traitor to her feminine gender. One of the main characteristics of her thought is hybridity and miscegenation. Her status defines herself as a foreigner situated among cultures that do not welcome her as their equals. Chicana, lesbian, mestiza: the different and intrusive condition that inhabits the interstices leaves traces on her identity. She states, "I am the embodiment of the hieros gamos: the coming together of opposite qualities within."[129] In this way, the liminal scenario is described as the non-place of an immigrant outside the canons of femininity. Geographically, Anzaldúa is located on the border, which separates Mexico from the US and drags other deeper borders, such as identity, linguistic, epistemological, and sexual. It is one of the others,

[128] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 22-23.
[129] Ibid., 19.

always out of place. Not entirely Mexican, but not quite American as such; crossed by the two languages of the colonizer: Spanish and English. For Chicana, whose body bears the memory of centuries of exploitation, barbarism, homophobia, and racism, the war of independence is a constant, the political struggle for emancipation does not cease, and the voice of the Beast is not silent in her texts.

Anzaldua engages in the decolonization of the feminist project. She is part of the group of Chicana authors whose work was featured in the well-known anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. The voices in this collection highlight an essential theoretical-political relocation of many feminist traditions. The work is a fundamental criticism of mainstream feminism, which is white, heterosexual, and upper-middle-class. It is produced by authors who believe their decolonizing messages have been ignored or disregarded. In all these publications, race and social class are intertwined and begin to manifest themselves as major political categories in the feminist campaign. The criticism allows a diverse feminist group to think rather than focusing solely on gender and sexual difference. Speaking from a place of contradictions indicates the impossibility of vindicating a common struggle from a safe and homogeneous location. The transformation of feminism requires assuming contradiction, otherness, and difference as a condition of the possibility of political praxis. Anzaldua states:

> For 300 years, [mestiza] was invisible, she was not heard. Many times, she wished to speak, to act, to protest, to change. The odds were heavily against her. She hid her feelings; she hid her truths; she concealed her fire; but she kept stoking the inner flame. She remained faceless and voiceless, but a light shone through her veil of silence. And though she was unable to spread her limbs and though for her right now the sun has sunk under the Earth and there is no moon, she continues to tend the flame. [130]

[130] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 22-23.

A profound break with specific feminism can be explored in all these texts. She questions some emancipatory discourses' deep Eurocentrism, ethnocentrism, and classism. She even questions the female subject itself and the implicit homophobia in the ideology of femininity. In this wake, Anzaldua begins his journey renouncing any safe place of enunciation. She situates herself in the "difference," in the diaspora, even in betrayal as a critical tool: What am I? She continually asks herself:

> I am a wind-swayed bridge, a crossroads inhabited by whirlwinds. […] 'Your allegiance is to La Raza, the Chicano movement,' say the members of my race. 'Your allegiance is to the Third World,' say my Black and Asian friends. 'Your allegiance is to your gender, to women,' say the feminists. […] What am I? A third world lesbian feminist with Marxist and mystic leanings. They would chop me up into little fragments and tag each piece with a label.[131]

By inhabiting the border, Anzaldua repoliticizes the wounds created by that specific border. Like any liminal space, the border will appear as a place of violence and marginalization, but simultaneously, as a possibility for a political proposal. If the border zones function as hierarchical and violent sites, Anzaldua believes it is necessary to resignify the borders and transform them into different modes of existence.

Anzaldúa redefines the 3,140 km border that separates the United States from Mexico as an "open wound," a wound that will go through the body of Third World women located and situated in that space of colonization and violence.[132] This wound is carried by the colonized. The colonial difference reorganizes the categories based on the idea of exteriority: the outside, the margins, the border, the periphery, is the place of the barbarian, the colonized, the uncivilized, the Indian, while in the center, one finds the rhetoric of the inside, space of civilization and progress. The border is presented as a non-place, an intermediate space, a

[131] As cited in Gloria Anzaldua, and AnaLouise Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 2.

[132] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 2.

crossroads between cultures, a zone of contamination, and segregation and death. It is not only a geographical location that identifies, locates, and places; it is also a political figure of linguistic, identity, and ontological demarcation: barbarism is defined from the border, which remains outside the limits, the margins of civilization. According to Anzaldua, the border delimits, divides, separates, and warns of the dangers of hybridization with the other. It redefines who one is and who the others are, those who are always perceived as a threat. “Borderlands” are not comfortable places because it produces "a shock culture, a border culture, a third country, a closed country."[133] In other words, "To be in the borderlands means to be in a continuous status of reiteration of non-belonging, of difference, and of alienation; to be in a place of contradiction, violence, and exploitation."[134]

Anzaldua's border thought appears as a decolonial strategy that, from a feminist proposal, appeals to different strategies for different identity reconfigurations. Those "others," displaced and deterritorialized, inappropriate even for hegemonic feminist discourses, belonging to those "rare groups," are erected from rebellion questioning those devices of production of otherness and difference. The border identities that Anzaldúa proposes (the so-called border identities) describe a new, more complex, and heterogeneous reality that must be assumed beyond any essentialism. The concept of the “mestiza” is politicized in "mestiza subjectivity," which underlines the lack of cultural purity, the fiction of cultural homogenization, and the unified subject. Because according to Anzaldua, residing on the border means living without boundaries. It indicates that they will always be at a crossroads. As Anzaldua writes:

> Indigenous like Coro, like corn, the *mestiza* is a product of crossbreeding, designed for preservation under various conditions. Like an ear of corn -- a female seed-bearing organ -- the mestiza is tenacious, tightly wrapped in the husks of her culture. Like kernels, she dings to the cob; with thick stalks

[133] Ibid., 11.
[134] A. Nasser, “Borderlands as a Site of Resistance in Gloria Anzaldúa’s Political Thought,” *USAbroad – Journal of American History and Politics* 4, no. 1 (2021): 22.

> and strong brace roots, she holds tight to the earth-she will survive the crossroads.[135]

Anzaldua resignifies the allegories to an animalized and ominous otherness by displacing female identity. As Anzaldua claims, the woman of the Third World, the Indian, the deviant, has always been humiliated, mistreated and betrayed, even by her own culture. "Mestizo consciousness" carries out the genealogy of colonial thought through a new political category (not simply cultural) crossed by the coordinates of gender, ethnicity, and social class: it is the prieta, “the new mestiza,” who is silenced and marginalized as the inappropriate and subordinate other, claims its legitimacy. Anzaldua claims one can make the uninhabitable, intermediate, and peripheral spaces by witnessing the silencing and politicizing of that zone of indifference. She reclaims the agency that is missing from “mestiza” for a long time. According to Anzaldua, being a border figure makes her more potent because it allows her to be flexible and creative:

> So, don't give me your tenets and your laws. Don't give me your lukewarm gods. What I want is an accounting with all three culture -- white, Mexican, Indian. I want the freedom to cane and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of my entrails. And if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new -una cultura mestiza-with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture.[136]

It is no coincidence that Anzaldúa defines herself as “the Shadow Beast” or the monster where she draws metaphors from animals to justify the most infamous violence and shake the foundations of the colonial regime. Anzaldua politically reappropriates those beasts of those "aliens," as she defines those subjects dispossessed of their subjectivity, marked by their skin color, sexual desire, and

[135] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 81.
[136] Ibid., 22.

ways of life. Anzaldua, who "speaks a forked tongue"; the whirlwind and the bridge, transforms the bruises into weapons for resistance.[137]

The new beast, rebellious and unstoppable, inhabits the "left hand" world, another fundamental category of Anzaldua. Compared to the straight, white, heterosexual world, the left-handed world is inhabited by all the marginalized of the white-right world: the rare groups, the who do not belong anywhere, the illegals, the wetbacks, the gay and queer, the itinerant workers, all those who challenge the established order and constitute a threat to it:

> The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. Los atravesados Iive here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who, cross over, pass over, argo through the confines of the "normal." Gringos in the U.S. Southwest consider the inhabitants of the borderlands transgressors, aliens-whether they possess documents or not, whether they're Chicanos, Indians or Blacks. Do not enter, trespassers win be raped, maimed, strangled, gassed" shot. Only "legitimate" inhabitants are those in power, the whites and those who align themselves with whites. Tension grips the inhabitants of the borderlands like a virus. Ambivalence and unrest reside there and death is no stranger.[138]

From the left-handed world, Anzaldua claims one can propose different ways of living, of living together. Because only from that crooked world can other possible worlds be thought of and reconfigured, in which to build, with mortar and feminist bricks, different universes, communities, relationships, and diverse affections. She develops “mestiza consciousness” which is based on "la facultad:" seeing from two or more perspectives simultaneously.[139]

Anzaldua encounters the logic of binarism that attempts to establish differentiation in her body. Her Grandma reacting to her skin with dark features as

[137] Ibid., 55.
[138] Ibid., 3-4.
[139] Ibid., 38.

"pura indita" (the black or Indian), meaning a life of segregation, hopes to find white traits.[140] It is the experience of being racialized very early. Grandma's action is an attempt to classify and differentiate or, in other words, to create borders as the "mestiza" tries to escape and resist her border condition. In general, the experience of Anzaldua with her Grandma is indicative of the general experience of the "mestiza." However, in addition to being mestiza, Anzadua recognizes herself as queer, and that experience will also make her inhabit the limit between multiple identities:

> What we suffer is an absolute despot duality that says that we can only be one or the other. It is claimed that nature and human life are limited and cannot evolve into something better. However, for me, like other queer people, I am two in one body, both male and female. I am the incarnation of the hieros gamos: the union of opposites in the same being.[141]

Borderlands: La Frontera is then elaborated as a physical and geographical place. It is the physical place of a mestizo and queer body—at the intersection of the productions of gender and race—and perhaps the geographical place inhabited on the border between Mexico and the United States. However, perhaps above all, *La Frontera* is a psychological and experiential place, the place of new mestizo identity, mobile and always in trouble, and therefore, the possibility of new knowledge.

Women of color feminism elaborates its critique of the logic of binaries and borders creating the possible third lands. The "border" is thus constituted as a place that symbolizes the limit and the possibility of transition. It is the desire for control and purity that generates a rejection of everything. It is multiple and cannot be classified. The desire for control also generates the fantastic story of a pure, unitary, simple, and one-dimensional subject. The history of modernity and the West is the history of the emergence of that subject. The factory of this fiction builds at the

[140] Anzaldua and Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 282.
[141] Ibid., 19.

same time a privileged point of view: The contemporary subject must be clothed, masked, and disguised to look capable of exercising the reduction of diversity to conformity, of plurality to unification. The unbiased arguer is not a part of history or tradition. The reduction of heterogeneity, the production of identity it, is always the exercise of wearing a mask to reduce the multiplicity into a single presence. This action, however, is what constitutes subjects, the one that makes one belong, subjecting one to something. Anzaldua states the painful exercise of looking beyond the mask she is forced to wear:

> Behind the ice mask I see my own eyes. They will not look at me. Miro que estoy encabro nada, miro la resistencia-resistance to knowing, to letting go, to that deep ocean where once I dived into death. I am afraid of drowning. Resistance to sex, intimate touching, opening myself to the alien other where I am out of control, not on patrol. The outcome on the other side unknown, the reins falling the horses plunging blindly over the crumbling path rimming the edge of the cliff, plunging into its thousand foot drop.[142]

Here, Anzaldua discusses the struggle of the "mestiza," for whom the possibility of resistance exists but is full of challenges that resemble one's "drowning."

The change that could make room for another experience and thought implies a strenuous exercise of resistance, which happens by assuming their contradictions Anzaldua and the "mestiza" can be seen as an example and metaphor of resistance. The "mestiza" is undefinable and uncontrollable in the context of contemporary control; she lacks essential components that can be managed. If trained oneself in binarisms, and the establishment of identities, then it would be necessary now to cultivate the possibility of resisting; it is about activating a new technology to indiscipline, exercising resistance, and mix. Being "mestiza" is dwelling ambivalence; practicing the mestizo way indicates considering all sorts of mestizaje. It contemplates shattering and discarding dualism, considering being

[142] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 48.

aberrant intentionally or unwillfully in a realm of the same, challenging paradigms. The “mestiza” inhabits a space where contradictions, ambiguities, and differences come into contact, where the possibility to break the limits and borders is given. The “mestiza” is referred to the task of inhabiting the multiple selves. As Anzaldua states:

> The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode-nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, but she also turns the ambivalence into something else.[143]

Anzaldua also discusses the term "Nepantla," which is the place where transformation occurs. Anzaldua, in *This Bridge We Call Home*, picks up an indigenous word “Nepantla” to talk about the border territories to the middle lands that are the limit but that can also be an experience of transit, transition, and learning. As a “mestiza” in multiple senses, Anzaldua dwells in the Third Space, a zone of mixing that's not just racial; as previously noted, the "borderland" is a hazy and unclear space generated by spiritual and mechanical residue. It's also in perpetual flux. It is a place of restlessness. “Nepantla” is like a bridge that embodies the possibility of something different.

In the third part of *Borderland/La Frontera*, Anzaldua talks about the possibility of transformation: the transition to "Nepantla." The transformation can break western imaginaries, challenging its dichotomous rationality. Anzaldua participates in the feminization of the land of Aztlán. Her elaboration on told stories reflects the recovery of the figures of the Aztec goddesses. It is an exercise that seeks to re-elaborate myths and reconstruct experiences that are erased by European colonization. Due to her conflicts with her brother, "Coyotxauhqui," an ancient Aztec deity, is torn into pieces. The fractured goddess indicates the impact of

[143] Ibid., 79.

Western reason and colonialism on the “mestiza.” The same thought imposes categories that have been divided and placed in separate compartments as the feminine and the masculine, darkness and light, life and death. Anzaldua proposes that the old goddess should be remade and recomposed. It is then a matter of giving space to the paradoxical: “entering the snake.” Anzaldúa's proposal appears again as a narrative of resistance where "Coatlicue," mother of "Coyotxauhqui," all paradoxes are encapsulated by the serpent goddess of darkness and light. The goddess reigned before the Aztecs used to be a warrior. In her kingdom, the equilibrium and the balance between the sexes existed. Thus, Anzaldua states that Coalticue can help find the way if one has lost it: Coatlicue displays the possibility of transformation. The goddess integrates all the symbols crucial to Aztec religion and philosophy. She states:

> Coatlicue depicts the contradictory. In her figure, all the symbols important to the religion and philosophy of the Aztecs are integrated. Like Medusa, the Gorgon,. she is a symbol of the fusion of opposites: the eagle and the serpent, heaven and the underworld, life and death, mobility and immobility, beauty and horror. When pain, suffering and the advent of death become intolerable, there is Tlazolteotl hovering at the crossroads of life to lure a person away from his or her seemingly appointed destination and we are held embrujadas, kept from our destiny, our soul arrested. We are not living up to our potentialities and thereby impeding the evolution of the soul-or worse, Coatlieue, the Earth, opens and plunges us into its maw, devours us. By. keepll1g the conscious mind occupied or immobile, the germinatlon work takes place in the deep, dark Earth of the unconscious.[144]

The state of “Coatlicue” makes the “mestiza” confused and unable to give it a name at all—now they inhabit the black Earth whereby the deity of plurality incapacitates them lest they manage to do the task of integrating, of bringing oppositions closer

[144] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 47.

together. Previously held by the West's mind, which is always busy, and immobilized, it is not easy to get hold of the psychic state encouraged by "Coatlicue," which requires a particular sensitivity. The sensitivity opens the doors to a knowledge of the Other. Anzaldua states, "Coatlicue" is the one that leads into the dark, but also the one that saves: it is "the prelude to the crossing."[145] "Coatlicue" can be a state of paralysis, it is shadow and darkness of the soul initially, but also it is the constant possibility of overcoming paralysis. The goddess leads to an internal—but also external struggle where the identity is put into question.

Consequently, it becomes possible to exist in another area where ambiguity emerges and produces a third identity that is mobile and always ready to transform. According to Anzaldua, colonization might have decimated indigenous societies, but it did not prevent the evolution of unique local, mestizo, queer, and mulatto psyches. Living in "Nepantla" means inhabiting the limit of the normal. Anzaldua proposes to build an alternative to the knowledge of the unitary subject and challenge the philosophical project of the West based on binary oppositions and restrictions of borders. The path, however, implies two directions; first, it requires the acknowledgment of history, then it extends towards the social. It is a collective vision activated through difference, celebrated together to transform the world. Furthermore, it is here where Anzaldua's political proposal is primarily articulated. In *This Bridge We Call My Back*, she privileges the displaced and the mestizos, as leaders, for a visionary movement of social change: They are unique individuals who do not fit anywhere in the dominant world or their own culture. Altogether, they embrace oppression. However, overwhelming oppression is the fact that they do not get together as a group. "El Mundo Zurdo" is a new world, a place where people from different trajectories come together to act together for revolutionary change. The space implies difference: communities based on the negotiation of differences. "New tribalism" from which, from the difference, one works for a typical (revolutionary) end.[146] Although one remains trapped in the world of reason,

[145] Ibid., 48.
[146] Anzaldua and Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 49.

intellect, and machines, an emerging world of difference, intuition, and the possibility of the middle lands is there. Finding the way requires a new mestizo consciousness, which creates a new universe and a new narrative. Anzaldua states:

> The work of mestiza consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended. The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts. A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking... could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence, of war. [147]

In *This Bridge We Call Home,* spirituality occupies a significant part in ending the violence. The "Conocimiento" or the change the "mestiza" experiences "spiritual activism:"

> Spiritual activism is a visionary experientally-based epistemology and ethics, a way of life and a call to action. At the epistemological level, spiritual activism posits a metaphysics of interconnectedness and employs relational modes of thinking. At the ethical level, spiritual activism includes specific actions designed to challenge individual and systematic racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of social injustice. Spiritual activism is spirituality for social change, spirituality that recognises the many differences among us yet insists on our commonalities and uses the commonalities as catalysts for transformation.[148]

Hence, Anzaldua utilizes connectionist thinking where interconnections and relations are valued. Through “spiritual activism,” one can reconnect with other species, such as animals, objects, or organisms at all levels. She destabilizes

[147] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 80.
[148] AnaLouise Keating, “Shifting Perspectives: Spiritual Activism, Social Transformation, and the Politics of Spirit,” in *EntreMundos/ AmongWorlds*, ed. AnaLouise Keating (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 242.

dualistic thinking and all types of hierarchies by realizing the "kinship among all things and people."[149] Also, Anzaldua states:

> Tu camino de conocimiento requires that you encounter your shadow side and confront what you've programmed yourself (and have been programmed by your cultures) avoid (des conocer), to confront traits and habits distorting how you see reality and inhibiting the full use of your facultades.[150]

After mestiza's journey on “the path of Conocimiento,” she experiences the "mission," which is about love, mutual relationship, negotiation, and being responsible for the community one shares a space. However, Anzaldua's idea of spirituality should not be confused with religious messages. Sarah Ohmer states: "Despite its spiritual connotation, el Conocimiento is not the synonym to a Divine Mission; it does not communicate an institutionalized religious message."[151] It involves the deconstruction of fanatic religious and scientific practices; she encourages others to "scrutinize the fruit they have borne and then ritually disengage from them."[152] Therefore, Anzaldua desires to create a ritual of interrogation. She brings the spirit back into the categories of mind and body where "spirituality does not come from outside of ourselves," instead, the "small voice" that everybody has created resistance and change in society.[153]

The questioning ritual is like an antidote to the "cultural trance" mestiza found herself in where she felt sick. Anzaldua likens the healing process to curing oneself of a spell. She states: "The upheaval jars you out of the cultural trance and spell of the collective mindset."[154] She states that everybody should be alarmed by the manipulative power of cultural labels in their lives and how destructive they are.

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[149] Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating, *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 568.
[150] Ibid., 541.
[151] Sarah Ohmer, “Gloria E. Anzaldúa’s Decolonizing Ritual de Conocimiento,” *Confluencia* 26, no. 1 (2010): 146.

[152] Anzaldúa and Keating, *This Bridge We Call Home*, 559.
[153] Ibid., 521.
[154] Ibid., 547.

She likens the ritual to a shamanic ritual where "like a shaman," you must "find a way to call your spirit home."[155] The “shaman” has such influence that she can rebalance the relationship between people and culture again. She pursues such a balance and then returns it to others to change them and be changed by them; however, as discussed before, the path consists of hardship, displacement, and alienation where the subject experiences ambiguous feelings. In this state, "[t]he self-reconnects with the cosmos"[156] because it can reconnect with others' suffering and relate it to its own. That process is called building the bridge, which is included in the title. Hernan Vidal states that having reconnected with nature, espirititus, the self disassembles the binaries: "borders" or "walls" are created to enhance the differences to control and block the others. Only "love" can heal: "Love is necessary corrective to the violence of systems of control and oppression; bilingualing love […] is the final utopic horizon for the liberation of human beings involved in structures of domination and subordination beyond their control."[157] Hence, the Earth's problem becomes everyone's problem, and an individual problem becomes the Earth's problem which means that all crises become interpersonal.

Anzaldua also mentions the “naguala” in “Now let us shift…the path of conocimiento…inner work, public acts,” which resembles the shamanic state. It is a shapeshifting technique that the Indians utilize which enables them to transform into an animal shape. Anzaldua also mentions being transformed into a snake in that manner: “I call the maker of spirit signs ‘la naguala’, a creative, dreamlike consciousness able to make broader associations and connections than waking consciousness.”[158] She emphasises the significance of “creativity” in finding similarities instead of creating demarcations. The “nagual” has the spiritual aim which is to create connections: “They build a decolonizing bridge between nature, espíritus and self that restores a shamanic power into the community, that dismantles and resists existing dogmas and ideologies related to continuing politics

[155] Ibid., 547.
[156] Ohmer, “Gloria E. Anzaldúa’s Decolonizing Ritual de Conocimiento,” 147.
[157] As cited in Ohmer, “Gloria E. Anzaldúa’s Decolonizing Ritual de Conocimiento,” 147.
[158] Gloria Anzaldua, “now let us shift ... the path of conocimiento ... inner works, public acts,” in *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*, ed. Anzaldu´and AnaLouise Keating (New York: Routledge, 2002), 577.

of violence, and that triggers inner / spiritual / personal / social / collective / material changes."[159] Also, Anzaldua states that the path to "Conocimiento" is a never ending process where the subject, the "nagual" embodies possibility.

Overall, Anzaldua is aware of the power of words: "The word, the image, and the feeling have a palatable energy, a kind of power."[160] The "mestiza" creates transformative meanings from her experience, bridging the concepts such as the individual and the collective where the personal transformation becomes a political and collective one. The "mestiza" is political, and her expression is threatening to the dominant discourse because it can realign the category of "difference" by dismantling the boundary oppositions or stable identity categories. Anzaldua expresses a new epistemology that counters hegemonic narrative where she utilizes the techniques such as transposition, multiple languages, and myths. She realigns the power relations where she rejects being the center of power but instead aims to be a negotiator.

To sum up, borderlands theory is a synthesis of frequently conflicting voices and visions, cutting across feminism, postcolonial theory, postmodernism, and queer theory. It is still occasionally seen as being potentially unfixed, living on the outside of academia, an iconoclastic outlaw attacking established paradigms, and racing haphazardly across departmental boundaries. It is probably only fitting, then, that Donna Haraway and Gloria Anzaldua, two iconoclastic Western foremothers, might be seen as the progenitors of borderlands theory. The "cyborg," Haraway's borderlands subject, intersects and interacts with "the mestiza" in ways that produce astonishing views of the borderlands and potent new methods of conceptualizing them. The "cyborg," like Anzaldua's "mestiza," is a by-product of intentional and joyful border-crossing and takes pleasure in shattering boundaries. The metaphors acknowledge and emphasize the role of social, ethnic, and ideological frontiers by engaging them rather than erasing differences and dissolving the limits between them. They demand a re-imagining of the mixed and the monstrous as well as the perversion of the purity of binaries since they cross borders rather than defy them

[159] Ohmer, "Gloria E. Anzaldúa's Decolonizing Ritual de Conocimiento," 151.
[160] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 71.

or enforce them. With this interpretation, the metaphors of “cyborg” and “the mestiza” can be observed as figures that cross borders and undermine traditional ideas of margins and centers. The theoretical work includes exposing borderlands theory as overt political where their overarching goal is to survive through affinities. They depend on having a variety of perspectives and being able to briefly perceive things from multiple angles, regardless of how incongruent those perspectives may seem. Although the twofold vision of the metaphors may be unsettling or even paradoxical, the perspectives offered by such an angle are incomparably more in-depth than those observed from just one side. Boundaries do not disappear; in fact, the exact reverse occurs: "like the walls of blood vessels, which by their existence define the form and content of the fluid flowing through them, yet they exist solely to permit continuous transfer and exchange of that fluid."[161] As assuredly as a breach of that boundary with oxygen and nutrients results in life, destroying the borders means death. The ability to establish a link across crucial differences through language and writing is essential for the survival of “cyborg” and “the mestiza.”

[161] Sara L Spurgeon, "The Cyborg Coyote: Generating Theory in the Borderlands," *Southwestern American Literature*, 34, no. 2 (2009): 27.

CHAPTER TWO
RETHINKING THE BORDER AS SHAPESHIFTING IN WILD SEED AND LAGOON

2.1. READING WILD SEED THROUGH CYBORG AND THE MESTIZA

The first novel to be analyzed is *Wild Seed* by Octavia Butler, an Afro-futurist sci-fiction novel. It is the fourth novel of the Patternist chronology, which also includes *Patternmaster* (1976), *Mind of My Mind* (1977), *Survivor* (1978), and *Clay's Ark* (1984). This chapter will examine the novel through the main characters Anyanwu and Doro in terms of their representation of the "cyborg" metaphor coined by Haraway in "A Cyborg Manifesto." The focus will be on how Butler's questions the categories of the human, the machine, the animal through Anyanwu and Doro's portrayal of "shapeshifting" and its implications for a better future. Finally, this study will compare Anyanwu and Doro's techniques to create a community where Anyanwu fulfils the dream of the beneficial cyborg by embodying difference. In contrast, Doro becomes a monovalent cyborg; he creates a community based on eugenics. Doro incorporates a colonialist perspective where sees everybody as nothing but a breeding stock and commodity. He states that "[his] people only buy and sell slaves."[162] By comparing Doro and Anyanwu, Butler celebrates difference by valuing notions such as negotiation, compassion, love, and partnership. Anyanwu's adaptation skills which result from her marginal position as the "mestiza" can transcend the colonizer and the colonized. As a "cyborg," she is outside the power structures, and that position allows the power to be redistributed. Butler shows how binaries established and maintained by the colonialist discourse do not help break down racist, sexist, and homophobic perspectives.

The story is about Anyanwu and Doro, who can live forever as maternal and paternal superhuman figures. Throughout the story, Doro, a dictator, tries to

[162] Octavia Butler, *Wild Seed* (New York: Warner Books, 1999), 46, Kindle.

manipulate Anyanwu, who can shapeshift into any form and heal herself and everybody around her. Doro tries to build a community using unique and powerful superhumans like Anyanwu by forcing them into reproduction. From the start, Anyanwu senses that she needs to serve Doro as a slave, although she has equal power. She is forced to marry Isaac, one of Doro's sons. She has married many times before she escapes from the New England colony. After Isaac's death, she establishes her community; however, as a manipulator, Doro continues to invade and control Anyanwu's community by threatening her to kill her children. Many of her children die because of Doro, and she tries to prevent further destruction by threatening Doro with committing suicide. However, Anyanwu and her survival skills show Doro how significant she is to him since she is his immortal partner; without Anyanwu, he will be doomed to eternal loneliness.

The novel focuses on two "cyborg" figures which are Doro and Anyanwu. Doro is confident in scientific knowledge and sees everybody as nothing but a breeding stock. He represents what Haraway deems the monovalent cyborg, which cannot balance nature and culture. Doro is the agent of tyranny in using technology. The bodies for Doro are rough materials that can be manipulated and shaped to serve his purposes. Michel Foucault's theorization of the "cellular discipline" fits Doro's genetic engineering in establishing his community where he forces his favorite subjects into marriage and robs them of their agency. Foucault states, "Discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, "docile" bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)."[163] Butler pictures Doro's colonies in Africa, the United States, and Europe. He chooses his favored subjects according to their abilities to know each other's thoughts or move objects. On the other hand, Anyanwu is reflected as the beneficial cyborg which embodies the fusion of animal and machine demolishes the oppositions between nature and culture, the self and the other. She is the representation of a technology that is emancipatory. She allows her subjects freedom and agency through negotiation. In her Canaan, the non-

[163] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 138.

hierarchical community Anyanwu embraces difference to the point where even embodiment is altered. Crucially, through the figuration of Anyanwu and her shapeshifting ability, Butler celebrates freedom of choice and fluidity and shows these aspects as critical elements for survival.

Following theorists such as Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldua, and Rosi Bradotti, Butler utilizes difference as a site of resistance and as a survival technique in a world where the marginal is forced into displacement and ambiguity in terms of her subordinate position. Through Anyanwu and her transgressions, she shows the importance of embracing differences where human beings even "are not afraid of their kinship with animals."[164] In creating Anwanwu and Doro as creatures between humans and aliens, Butler questions what a human is. Anyanwu's "shapeshifting" erases the boundary between me and not I. In that case, she also becomes an Anzalduan boundary crosser, the "nagual," where she playfully crosses between races, genders, and animals. She represents the "mestiza" figure that can end violence through education and knowledge sharing.

Donna Haraway's question "Why should our bodies end at skin?" resonates in *Wild Seed*.[165] Shapeshifting characters of the novel often question feminist embodiment where they show that body is not an immutable or biologically given phenomenon. Similarly, the debates of Rosi Bradotti demonstrate that the body is both material and verbal and that the understandings and perceptions of it as material are always politically influenced. Throughout the novel, the readers observe the temporal boundaries that Anyanwu's body imposes on her subject when she performs the roles of an enslaved person, a mother, and a woman. Therefore, the readers can observe Anyanwu as a recognizable and unfamiliar subject. Like most of her fictions, *Wild Seed*'s protagonists are the abject figures, which refers to an adverse human reaction threatened by dissolution in meaning resulting from the loss of the distinction between subject and object or between self-other. The alien subject can be compared to Anzaldua's "mestiza," both "the prohibited and

[164] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 154.
[165] Ibid., 178.

forbidden" one.[166] Anyanwu, like the mestiza subject, inhabits "Borderlands" and becomes "Los atravesados." Anzaldua defines "Borderlands": "Los atravesados live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half-dead, in short, those who cross-over, pass over, or go through the confines of the normal."[167] Anyanwu and Doro are both "transgressors" in the novel. However, Anyanwu is the one who can establish a thriving community since she embodies the "mestiza consciousness" and what Haraway deems as the "beneficial cyborg." Anyanwu is a survivor and a spiritual activist because she can excavate the "mother culture" and produce an alien consciousness where she undoes the legacies of patriarchy, homophobia, and European Imperialism. Anyanwu shows that Doro's mimicking of patriarchal and Imperialistic culture is ineffective in creating a healthy community; instead, mutual understanding and negotiation are the real power that holds a society together.

Even though Doro is an "abject" figure like Anyanwu, he cannot recognize the humanity in people. He falls into the illusion of "objectivity," where he mimics the colonialists who "made objects of things and people when it distanced itself from them[…]"[168] Anyanwu goes against the Enlightenment epistemology since she has the "consciousness of duality." Through her shapeshifting abilities, she cannot be recognized by Doro and, her skills allow her the freedom to observe "official reality" as the "root of all violence."[169] Throughout the novel, Anyanwu changes bodies; she becomes white, black, male, female, or different animals such as dolphins, birds, or pythons. She represents Haraway and Anzaldua's subjectivity, hybridized, mixed, and plural rather than split. Anyanwu embodies insider and outsider, man and woman, good and evil, and nature and culture. Through her fluidity, she also shows that race and gender are not something different, but they intersect. Anyanwu holds dichotomies and creates a Third space where differences are negotiated and welcomed. Like Anzaldua, she does not create a community based on blood and essence, "[she] comes from all colors, all classes, all races, all

[166] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 3.
[167] Ibid., 3.
[168] Ibid., 37.
[169] Ibid., 37.

time periods. [her] role is to link people with each other -the Blacks with Jews with Indians with Whites- and finally with extraterrestrials."[170] In that case, Anyanwu also exceeds time and space; she revises the past and connects history with the present. Also, Anyanwu, as the extraterrestrial and the alien, reflects Anzaldua's analysis of the alien as "embodiments of difference and deviance."[171] Butler turns aliens into subjects who can present an alternative community that recognizes humanity as an abject figure.

Anyanwu represents Haraway's "cyborg," which is closely related to the "woman of color," representing "a kind of post-modernist identity of [the] otherness, difference, and specificity."[172] Anyanwu can experience different bodies through her shapeshifting abilities, whether human or animal. When she becomes a leopard, she really becomes a leopard, or when she becomes a dolphin, she really becomes a dolphin; she even constructs familial relationships. Finally, however, she always turns to her proper form, an Igbo woman. Here, Butler turns the "abject" figure of Igbo woman into a speaking subject in her use of what Gayatri Spivak calls "the strategic use of an essence as a mobilizing slogan."[173]

Haraway recognizes three dissolutions of boundaries; the first one is between humans and animals, how their genetic material differs from each other, the second one is between humans, animals, and machines; machines are becoming more intelligent in cognitive processes. The third one is the boundary between physical and non-physical. She states that "cyborg" complicates these boundaries by problematizing "the status of man and woman, human, artifact, member of a race, individual identity, or body."[174] Anyanwu and Doro challenge the boundaries defined by Haraway, especially about the physical and non-physical, and the body. Butler poses the subject of what a body and its identities are through her protagonists. Identities linked to one's body are very volatile concepts prone to vagueness and fluctuation in many social settings. Indeed, Butler shows that more

[170] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 84.
[171] Ibid, 18.
[172] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 155.
[173] Gayatri Spivak, "In a Word: Interview," in *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 3.
[174] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 178.

than the components of skin and bone, the body is made up of experience and history. The concept is similar to Foucault's assertion that gendered roles and responsibilities are constructed through language rather than biological reality.

Doro is a vampire-like spirit who poses as an antagonist to Anyanwu. He is an immortal who invades the bodies of other people. Because of his incomplete transition, he is doomed to exist only by wearing the bodies of different humans who die when Doro owns their bodies by killing them. He has nobody of his own. His body is defined as a "great light, a fire."[175] He can be male or female or be at any age, young or old. He can skip from one body to another fast. Likewise, he can sense the existence of a human with superhuman powers from afar, although the person cannot sense his power. He has killed so much that he does not value human life and experience. He only values humans for practical reasons. Doro transcends external markers such as race and gender through his bodiless existence, although he wants to create a super race. Wearing the bodies uncovers him to his people, and the accountability of the bodies creates a connection between him and the people. "Shapeshifting" for Doro is a survival technique; he can switch to another body whenever he encounters death. Although he connects to the people in terms of their bodies, he cannot change his essence and be that person or an animal. Instead, he treats the body as genetic makeup. His wish to get unusual bodies with extraordinary capabilities leads him to Anyanwu. At first glance, he can sense that Anyanwu is something "more than an old woman."[176] The story connects these two characters because they are similar in their otherness. They would be the best match if they were not created as antagonists but partners since they are both alone and immortal with unique abilities. On the other hand, Anyanwu, as a shapeshifter, can manipulate her physical form; she also can change her gender, race, and species by inhabiting different bodies. When Doro and Anyanwu encounter, she is in the guise of an older woman living alone as the mother of many children. However, she is different from Doro in her shapeshifting because she can also change her essence, although she returns to her Igbo woman shape when she becomes a person or an

[175] Butler, *Wild Seed*, 275.
[176] Ibid., 6.

animal. When Doro asks her that she had to "eat leopard flesh to learn to become a leopard," she explains:

> No, I could see what the leopard was like. I could mold myself into what I saw. I was not a true leopard, though, until I killed one and ate a little of it. At first, I was a woman pretending to be a leopard—clay molded into leopard shape. Now when I change, I am a leopard.[177]

Like Doro, Anyanwu embodies a scientific side where she eats an animal to transform herself. She needs to study "herself down to the atoms…She can "clone" an animal or fish only after she has eaten some of it and studied within her genetic makeup. She is both the scientist and the laboratory."[178] Cannibalism is a significant metaphor where "the introjected object is occluded and destroyed, only in order to be assimilated and transformed by the host."[179] Anyanwu's ability to become a leopard, her quick assimilation and transformation show the material forms do not limit her incorporation. The quote also shows Haraway's utopia in which "A cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints."[180] She also embodies such contradictory standpoints by changing her essence. For instance, she spends lots of time in a white man's body in mid-nineteenth-century America. In her white form, she acts like a white man and holds a colonialist thought. She states, "I was not seeing the slaves in front of me. I would not have thought I could be oblivious to such a thing."[181] Doro's and Anyanwu's "shapeshifting" both arise from the human need to survive; however, the way they shapeshift "dramatizes a battle between two modes of

[177] Ibid., 86.
[178]Thelma J. Shinn, "The Wise Witches: Black Women Mentors in the Fiction of Octavia E. Butler," in *Conjuring: Black Women, Fiction, and Literary Tradition*, Eds. Marjorie Pryse and Hortense J. Spillers (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 213.
[179] As cited in Peter Sands. "Octavia Butler's Chiastic Cannibalistics." *Utopian Studies* 14, no. 1 (2003): 3.
[180] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 154.
[181] Butler, *Wild Seed*, 226.

knowing and being; the tyrannical force of an egotistical, disembodied mind and the transformative powers of an utterly embodied woman."[182] Thus, Doro's aim to clear out the bodies from their identities is Cartesian and Capitalist since his "shapeshifting" shows bodies as nothing but vestments and investments. For example, Doro shows how he destroys a young tribesman's body who does not submit to his authority. However, this does not show that Doro can colonize Anyanwu since Doro cannot sense or detect Anyanwu's presence in animal forms. Anyanwu's "shapeshifting" is more mobile than Doro's since it cannot be located. Anyanwu is "flexible and dexterous, compared to Doro's stiffness and dominance."[183] Anyanwu becomes Braidotti's nomadic subject, emphasizing movement and flexibility of location.

Anyanwu's body gives her a sense of freedom. In Anzaldua's words, a site of resistance and subversion. Her alien body resembles the Chicana experience, which forces the Chicana body into dislocation and border crossings. Thus, the Chicana body becomes "a site of ambiguity and contradiction due to "the Chicana's racial and cultural hybridity,"[184] which also forces her into a migratory status. Anyanwu can be compared to Mexican folkloric female figures that Anzaldua mentions, such as La Llorona, La Malinche, and La Virgin de Guadalupe. Anyanwu is often feared as "[a] woman through whom a god spoke." [185] She is an otherworldly immortal creature in a Bakhtinian sense which is "monstrous," "grotesque," and "spectacular."[186] Society fears Anyanwu, although she can heal everybody, including herself. She is Anzalduan's "Shadow Beast," which is seen as threatening to the patriarchal regime. Although Anyanwu does not perform witchcraft, she is blamed by people and called "a witch." She reflects on the fear of the other: "She learned quickly that it was not good to be different. Great differences

[182] Stacy Alaimo, "Skin Dreaming: The Bodily Transgressions of Fielding Burke, Octavia Butler, and Linda Hogan," in *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy,* eds. Greta Claire Gaad and Patrick D. Murphy (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 126.
[183] Ruth Salvaggio, "Octavia Butler and the Black Science-Fiction Heroine," *Black American Literature Forum*, 18, no. 2 (1984): 81.
[184] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 30.
[185] Butler, *Wild Seed*, 5.
[186] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968).

caused envy, suspicion, fear, charges of witchcraft."[187] Doro fears her because her mobile body is undetectable. Her survival skills make a threat. It is stated in the novel that "[s]he was a witch surely. In any culture, she would be feared. She would have to fight to keep her life. Even sensible people who did not believe in witches would turn against her."[188] Also, Anyanwu's transformation into animals like dolphins and birds is similar to Anzaldua's imagined transformation into a snake or an eagle. Like Anyanwu, Anzaldua states that when she transforms into a snake, she expresses the physical sensation of being taken by and becoming a serpent. Anzaldua expresses her transformation:

> Suddenly, I feel like I have another set of teeth in my mouth. I tremor goes through my body from my buttocks to the room of my mouth. On my palate I feel a tingling ticklish sensation, then something seems to be falling on me, a curtain of rain or light.[189]

Anzaldua's transformation even if metaphorical shows Chicana experience which is mobile, transformative, and reactive. Anyanwu lives in "sin fronteras" which is shown of Anzaldua as the only way to survive.

Moreover, Anyanwu's "shapeshifting" is a creative activity. Greene states that it can be seen as "a pseudo-linguistic or literary skill rather than merely a form of physical prowess."[190] She takes Anyanwu as a "powerful writer and an editor."[191] By shapeshifting into different forms, she interprets and gets involved in an editorial process. She reads other species' bodies while being transformed into them, which she expresses as "flesh messages."[192] Doro can be seen as an omniscient author who desires an authoritative voice. However, Anyanwu desires to be the editor who rearranges or regathers everyone: "she was not Doro, breeding people as though

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[187] Ibid., 57.
[188] Ibid., 31.
[189] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 51.
[190] Amelia Z. Green, "Octavia Butler and the Language of the Flesh," In *Gender and Environment in Science Fiction*, eds. Tidwell, Christy, and Bridgitte Barclay (London: Lexington Books, 2019), 46.
[191] Ibid., 47.
[192] Butler, *Wild Seed*, 86.

they were cattle … She was herself, gathering family."[193] Her ability to read "flesh messages" makes her welcome to change, improvement, and adaptation. “Flesh messages” clarify that reading and writing are embodied experiences. When Anyanwu heals Doro’s borrowed body, she bites the wound, allowing her to elaborate on the meaning of that body as she reads it. To heal the wound, she rewrites the infection: “‘There were things in your hand that should not have been there,’ she told him. ‘Living things too small to see. I have no name for them, but I can feel them and know them when I take them into my body. As soon as I know them, I can kill them within myself.’”[194] She can delete the forms in Doro and heal him: “Her fluency in the language of the flesh makes her a healer and an editor: she rewrites the messages inside the wound and passes a bit of her editorial power to Doro’s body.”[195] Therefore, Anyanwu’s reading of the bodies is a creative process: she is both the listener and the editor who can rewrite the messages. It is stated, “For her, the flesh of the fish told her all she needed to know about the creature’s physical structure. . .. Just a small amount of raw flesh told her more than she had words to say. Within each bite, the creature told her its story clearly thousands of times.”[196] The creative aspect of her “shapeshifting” and her reading of the flesh resembles Haraway's "cyborg writing," which is all about survival where she sees the act of writing by the women of color as a liminal transformation. Anyanwu's creative shapeshifting also resembles Anzaldua's "mestiza," who also desires to be creative and flexible and is ready to claim a space denied to her through writing. For the “mestiza,” writing is a survival technique which is described as physical as it allows her to create herself and her body. As Anzaldua states: “When I write it feels like I’m carving bone. It feels like I’m creating my own face, my own heart—Nahuatl concept. My soul makes itself through the creative act. It is constantly remaking and giving birth to itself through my body.”[197]

[193] Ibid., 235.
[194] Ibid., 31.
[195] Green, “Octavia Butler and the Language of the Flesh,”47.
[196] Butler, *Wild Seed*, 85.
[197] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 73.

Adaptive strategy is shown as more potent than mimicry in the novel. Throughout the novel, she is pictured as "flexible and dexterous…She uses prowess rather than direct, confrontational power. In Anyanwu, we find a woman who learns to use her abilities to survive."[198] Butler states that "Anyanwu […] had been a slave twice in her life and had escaped only by changing her identity completely […]"[199]For instance, she transforms herself into a "phyton":

> [She] became a sacred phyton, and no one dared to harm [her]. The phyton shape brought [her] luck. [Her people] were needing rain to save the yam crops, and while [she] was a phyton, the rains came. The people decided that [her] magic was good and it took them a long time to want to kill [her]again.[200]

Also, on several occasions she utilises "shapeshifting" to protect herself from rape and abuse. Although originally inhabiting an Igbo identity, she changes and evolves throughout the novel. Once she is transformed to a male identity, she states the significance of "shapeshifting" to survive in a patriarchal regime: "people will think before they attack a man – even a small one. And they will not become as angry if a man gives them a beating […] she was somewhat safer as a man, although here, among African and European slavers, no one was truly safe."[201] "Shapeshifting" is not the only way Anyanwu adapts to her environment as a borderland figure. She develops skills such as camouflage. Butler states, for Anyanwu, "It was always useful to be able to camouflage oneself to hide or to learn the things people either would not or could not deliberately teach her about themselves. This when she could speak English well, of course."[202] Hence, she learns English with patience. Anyanwu is open to change and transformation. Indeed, as a liminal figure she has to negotiate different cultures by learning English, wearing western clothes or

[198] Salvaggio, "Octavia Butler and the Black Science-Fiction Heroine," 81.
[199] Butler, *Wild Seed*, 9
[200] Ibid., 16.
[201] Ibid., 41.
[202] Ibid., 93.

following western celebrations such as marriage. Anyanwu tells that "In [this] new country, if you wish to marry, you must pledge yourselves before priest or a man of authority like Woodley."[203] She utilizes adaptation to go beyond restrictive borders and arbitrary rules by creating new learning possibilities. With each form, she embodies different social positions and broadens her knowledge. Like the "mestiza," she learns to "juggle cultures."[204] She acknowledges her multiplicity as a subject. She is "a woman with a foot in both worlds […]"[205] Anyanwu's camouflage skills should not be confused with the annihilation of the cultural existence or her becoming anglicized. For instance, Thomas, one of the breeders of Doro, asks Anyanwu to "turn white."[206] She responds by saying, "I think you have to endure it somehow that I am black."[207] She turns to white if she needs to; she explains, "If I have to be white someday to survive, I will be white. If I have to be a leopard to hunt and kill, I will be a leopard. If I have to travel quickly across land, I'll become a large bird. If I have to cross the sea, I'll become a fish."[208] Like Anzaldua, Anyanwu does not set total alienation or denial of her roots. However, she opts instead for a "serpentine movement" that moves forward only to come back to where it all started.[209] Anyanwu says Doro:

> [Y]ou have not understood how completely one body can change. I cannot leave it as you can, but I can make it over… so completely in the image of someone else that I am no longer related to my parents. It makes me wonder what I am – that I can do this and still know myself, still return to my true shape.[210]

Anyanwu does not follow mimicry, which is:

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[203] Ibid., 71.
[204] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 79.
[205] Moraga and Anzaldua, *This Bridge Called My Back*, 34.
[206] Butler, *Wild Seed*, 175.
[207] Ibid., 175.
[208] Ibid., 175.
[209] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 35.
[210] Ibid., 175.

> [A]n increasing important term in post-colonial theory because it has come to describe the ambivalent relationship between colonizer and colonized. When colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to "mimic" the colonizer, by adopting the colonizer`s cultural habits, assumptions, institutions, and values, the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits. Rather the result is a "blurred copy of the colonizer that can be quite threatening. [211]

In *Wild Seed* mimicry is a faulty strategy because the colonized subjects are not mobile but static. Anyanwu's adaptation skills as a black woman inhabiting a marginal space allow her personal growth. Also, Anyanwu manipulates and adapts her healing skills in Western sense when she moves to the New World:

> There, she discovered that her body had reacted badly to one specific food – a rich sweet that she knew no name for, but that she has loved … Now, as she lays still, analyzing, learning not only which food made her ill, but which ingredient in that food, she was comfortably aware of Doro nearby … 'Have you heated yourself?' he asked. 'Yes. But with so much food, it took me a long time to learn what was making me sick.' 'Do you have to know?' 'Of course. How can I know what to do for healing until I know what healing is needed and why? I think I knew all the diseases and poisons of my people. I must learn the ones here.[212]

In contrast, until the end of the novel, Doro stays static where he is a predator who is always threatening and fatal, and there is no room for adaptation for him. Until he meets Anyanwu, he stays the same. Doro can skip from one body to another. Although his body changes, his mind stays the same.

Anyanwu's "shapeshifting" also destabilizes the gender identity's relation to the body. Anyanwu's androgynous nature is transgressive since it acknowledges the material basis of identity and physical experience by self-adapting new forms

[211] B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, and H. Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 124-125.
[212] Butler, *Wild Seed*, 126.

of expression. Anyanwu has relationships with men and women; when she transforms into a white male during the times when slavery existed in the United States, she marries a white woman and possesses a plantation in the South. She has sexual encounters with her wife in a man's body and even bears children with her, yet both women love the gender by which they relate. Butler destabilizes the power structures based on gender and race. Gender is prescribed in discourses of power when Anyanwu takes on the body of a white man to protect her people. Also, two women are linked to each other, which goes beyond the heterosexual and racist prescriptions when a white and black woman falls in love. When Doro asks her why the woman married her she says, "Because I believed her … And after a while, we started to want each other."[213] The desire of Anyanwu's lover transcends conventional forms of sexuality. The symbolic value of the shapeshifter as androgynous does not lie in a male-defined synthesis of "masculine" traits combined with a few "positive" feminine ones. Instead, it represents the ability to attain identity – a coherent sense of self – not through socially defined gender assignments but through a subjectivity that transcends biology and adapts to desire. Doro's non-material interior identity is apart from external appearance; it is not contextual and is thus static. In contrast, Anyanwu's identity is linked to the material, mediated by external appearance/material makeup and social standing. This identity can be understood as evading the extremes of identity as either socially constructed or essential. Anyanwu's fluid body enables her adaptive identity, which challenges the stable sex/gender/sexuality correlation without erasing the body's materiality. Anyanwu represents what Sandoval argues as "Third-world women" who develop a "differential consciousness." Anyanwu can recognize that she is more than her gender and a biological phenomenon.

Moreover, Butler subverts the gender roles through Anyanwu's "shapeshifting" where she can change both her biological sex and racial appearance even though at first Anyanwu and Doro reflect traditional gender roles as being the matriarch and the patriarch. Each character indeed goes beyond the gender norms.

[213] Ibid., 233.

Significantly, Anyanwu complicates gender binaries as being either male or female and makes possible the emergence of a new space or a third space through her manipulation of the body. In that case, she also fits into the definition of the "cyborg": gender is alterable as a biological and social phenomenon. Butler plays with the readers' expectations by emphasizing Anyanwu's subjugation as being a wife or a mother; however, she does this intentionally to expose the very structure she wants to undermine. Butler creates Anyanwu as a shapeshifter who can transform into a man and a woman and a mother who needs to protect her children from Doro. Anyanwu is both hyper-feminized and has what is usually termed as "masculine" abilities. Anyanwu submits to Doro because she wants to protect her community which results from the urge to survive. She is blessed with the ability to transform her body and evade Doro's reign; however, interestingly, she prefers to live as a biological female most of the time. As an Igbo woman, she chooses to perform a maternal role. Doro also can transform his body into a male or a female. Doro also fathers and mothers children using the bodies of his victims, but they are biologically the children of the victims he has killed. Thus, Butler creates a third ground through her character's performativity to show that gender identity and biological sex manifestations do not always match. She does not grant her characters a strict role based on females or males. The crucial aspect in defining the relationships becomes the human agency, to choose the respective roles in a society depending on someone's actions.

Anyanwu also creates a third ground and goes beyond the colonized and the colonizer, where she plays a pivotal role in altering the established power dynamics. Anyanwu's body can evade Doro's colonization since she is placed into a position where she has the freedom and discretion to grant or withhold Doro's yearning.. At the end of the novel, she can destroy Doro by just killing her body; however, she does the opposite and changes Doro and everybody in the community by assuming an identity beyond the colonizer and the colonized. To reflect a third ground where race, gender, and social positions are not fixed characteristics that describe oneself, Butler distorts the Western gender binary framework and racially predetermined hierarchical assumptions.

Anyanwu rejects separatist ideologies and challenges sexism, racism, and homophobia through "shapeshifting" and healing. She challenges Doro's genetic engineering and his way of creating a community that only sees bodies as commodities and vestments. Indeed, Butler's account discredits such a colonial effort, which is why Doro's idea collapses. Indeed, she values difference, negotiation, love, and agency. Despite his power, including his mind control ability, Doro is nothing but a parasite afraid of any challenge to his authority. If someone tries to shake his authority, he kills them. Doro enforces a separatist ideology where there is only the master. The bodies do not have a human value; they are empty and exist only for survival. However, Anyanwu as an agent of change, is successful in changing Doro's plans where she deconstructs his assumptions about his breeding project. She creates a change in herself, Doro, and the people around her, her community who values education, sharing, and wisdom. Anyanwu, at the end of the novel, archives what Anzaldua calls "spiritual activism," where she heals the whole community. Hence, Anyanwu's "shapeshifting" gains a political aim where she can restore the order. The lines regarding identity politics are redrawn to develop a new sort of community that celebrates diversity.

Anyanwu's shape-changing ability allows her a non-violent form of resistance since she values human agency and believes in choice. Instead of tyranny and absolute rule, she values community and balance. The readers might suppose Anyanwu to "reverse the typical male science-fiction stereotype and replace male tyranny with female tyranny. Though Butler's heroines are dangerous and powerful women, their goal is not power. They are heroines not because they conquer the world, but because they conquer the very notion of tyranny."[214] Anyanwu does not attack people's minds, unlike Doro's manipulation and invasion. She knows how to poison people, but she uses her knowledge to heal people. Doro embodies a capitalist ideology where he deceives people into thinking that they will live the "land and seed" and a "good place" and pursue a happy and secure life.[215] However,

[214] Salvaggio, "Octavia Butler and the Black Science-Fiction Heroine," 81.
[215] Butler, *Wild Seed*, 63.

Anyanwu is a "free-born woman," challenging Doro.[216] Anyanwu does not separate herself from her community where she lives among them. She even breastfeeds the community children, which shows her as caring and sharing. Melzer states, "sharing becomes a symbol against the binary construction of self and other thus constitutes a crucial metaphor for re-defining social relations in Butler's narratives."[217] Anyanwu teaches people how to become healers "so that they can heal themselves and their families without depending on what they see as my [her] magic."[218] She teaches people how to cure illnesses by showing them remedies. She wants them to have an agency where they will not rely on any superior power to heal them. Indeed, she says that "people must be their own gods."[219] As the "cyborg," she "would not recognize the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust."[220]

Anyanwu embodies fluidity who values balance. That can be seen when she transforms into a dolphin. The choice of a sea creature is significant because the sea, specifically water, represents fluidity and freedom. She finds water a comfortable home where she can "think through confusion, take away boredom."[221] The symbol of water embodies contradictions. It represents the Atlantic slave trade in the Middle Passage and the exploitation of enslaved people and resources. Water also has a sacred meaning in an African mythos, where we encounter divinities like Mami Wata. In African mythos, it represents harmony:

> Mami Wata is a complex symbol with so many resonances that she feeds the imagination, generating, rather than limiting, meanings and significances. She is at once a nurturing mother; sexy mama; provider of riches; healer of physical and spiritual ills; and embodiment of dangers and desires, risks and challenges, dreams and aspirations, fears and

[216] Ibid., 61.
[217] Melzer, *Alien Constructions,* 11.
[218] Butler, *Wild Seed,* 287.
[219] Ibid., 21.
[220] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 151.
[221] Butler, *Wild Seed,* 266.

> forebodings. People are attracted to the seemingly endless possibilities she represents and, at the same time, frightened by her destructive potential.[222]

Thus, Mami Wata is like Coyotxauhqui that Anzaldua discusses. Anyanwu also brings harmony. She changes her name to "Emma," meaning "grandmother": "In California, she finally took a European name, Emma. She had heard that it meant grandmother or ancestress, and this amused her. She became Emma Anyanwu."[223] She becomes a global phenomenon. She juggles African and Western cultures. Incorporation of those two cultures is reflected:

> Doro looked up at the portrait of Anyanwu on the wall opposite the high, shallow fireplace. The style of the house was English here, Dutch there, Igbo somewhere else. Anyanwu had made earthen pots, variations of those she had once sold in the marketplaces of her homeland, and stout handsome baskets. People bought them from her and placed them around their houses as she had. Her work was both decorative and utilitarian, and here in her house with its Dutch fireplace and kas, its English settle and thronelike wainscot chairs, it evoked memories of a land she would not see again.[224]

She gathers her children from different races and becomes known to everybody in the village. Anyanwu embodies the vision of her community which embraces everybody and anticipates mutual connection. Like her, her community joins the binaries: it combines advancement and customs like Emma Anyanwu, a combination of the colonizer and colonized. Her community resembles the dolphin community she values. According to Anyanwu, the dolphin community symbolizes progress and civilization because, unlike humans, they do not harm their breed and protect their children no matter what happens. The dolphin community is praised because it goes against the capitalist ideology, which brands people according to

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[222] "Sources And Currents: Who Is Mami Wata? Mami Wata: Arts for Water Spirits In Africa And Its Diasporas". Africa.Si. Edu. https://africa.si.edu/exhibits/mamiwata/who.html.
[223] Butler, *Wild Seed*, 297.
[224] Ibid., 150.

their skills and appearance, whereas the dolphin community emphasizes partnership and recognition. Anyanwu states, "Swimming with [the dolphins] was like being with another people. A friendly people. No slavers with brands and chains here. No Doro with gentle, terrible threats to her children, to her."[225] Butler, by juxtaposing human and animal community, shows that animal community is more human than the animal community. Animals are usually attached to savagery whereas being human is associated with civilization. However, Butler shows civilization as a subjective category. Once Isaac states:

> Before you were Anyanwu … mother of I-don't-know-how-many children, priestess to your people, respected and valued woman of your town. But to the people here, you would be savage, almost an animal if they saw you wearing only your cloth. Civilization is the way one's own people live. Savagery is the way foreigners live.[226]

What is rational for Anyanwu is to protect her kind and accept others no matter what difference they may have. Anyanwu returns to her true shape does not show any racial superiority but humanity. Unlike capitalist society, the difference is not a sign of weakness but empowerment. Anyanwu does not compete with Doro even though he accuses her of raising "witches," she rejects it. Although she is immortal and seen as a goddess by the people, she puts herself in an equal position. She dreams to be independent rather than being a master herself:

> She had even found difficult to be a good wife in her most recent years because of the way a woman must bow her head and be subject to her husband. It was better to be as she was -- a priestess who spoke with the voice of a god and was feared and obeyed. But what was that? She had become a kind of master herself.[227]

[225] Ibid., 90.
[226] Ibid., 6.
[227] Ibid., 10.

Therefore, she questions the idea of dominance and power. Doro, throughout the novel, finds himself in a competition, he usually checks his children, and if he finds them more powerful than himself, he immediately kills them. Doro is seen as cruel in Doro's man Bernard Daly who works at an English factory. The readers learn that Doro has cut off one of his arms. While supervising the slave area, the narrator talks about the smell of cooked bodies and hears the screaming people. Instead of harming people, Anyanwu helps them heal themselves. Anyanwu also values nature as a necessary component in humans' lives. While globalization is built to harm nature, Anyanwu and her community see trees and animals as significant as human beings. Anyanwu only uses violence when she is threatened or sees any harm to the environment. For instance, Anyanwu warns Isaac that dolphins are like humans and not inanimate objects when he wants to kill one: "They are like people […] 'They are not fish!' She swore she would have nothing more to do with Isaac if he killed another of them."[228] She sees animals as part of the community. She brings together everybody and "care[s] for them and help[s] them care for each other."[229] Anyanwu has strong senses; she discerns the American Civil War and moves her community to California to save them. Later in the novel, Doro starts valuing Anyanwu not only because she is a "wild seed," but she is capable of establishing a successful society. When Anyanwu threatens him with committing suicide and destroying herself, Doro's thoughts are pictured as follows:

> Please, Anyanwu'. Listen. She was still alive. 'Listen to me. There isn't anything I wouldn't give to be able to lie down beside you and die when you die. You can't know how I've longed . . .' He swallowed. 'Sun Woman, please don't leave me.' His voice caught and broke. He wept. He choked out great sobs that shook his already shaking body almost beyond bearing. He wept as though for all the past times when no tears would come when there was no relief. He could not stop.[230]

[228] Ibid., 98.
[229] Ibid., 247.
[230] Ibid.,148.

Doro shows Cesaire's boomerang effect where the colonizer's lives become entrenched and dependent upon the colonized.[231] Thus, when Anyanwu transcends her position as a colonized and does not recognize Doro as a colonizer, Doro realizes. Anyanwu welcomes Doro to the third space with no dichotomies, such as the colonizer and the colonized. She helps Doro realize his humanity and proves that scientific racism and technology alone are not enough in establishing a healthy society. Govan states, "What Anyanwu resists with all her might is what she perceives as dehumanization."[232] Doro welcomes his other, whom he realizes to be Anyanwu. He realizes that he needs Anyanwu, and without her, he is doomed to loneliness.

Anyanwu's "shapeshifting" and adaptation skills create a shift between the classifications such as colonizer/colonized, male/female, and human/animal. She thwarts coloniality to conquer a movement of resistance. She helps to prevent the local history from growing into a global scheme. Anyanwu as the representative of the subaltern like Anzaldua, see that coloniality attempts to eliminate difference and multiplicity of the voices, so she embodies border thinking which "works toward the restitution of the colonial difference that colonial translation attempted to erase."[233] The "mestiza consciousness" is painful, and it is in continual transformation. Being a "mestiza" is seeing through the eyes of the other where the subject/ object relationship collapses. Anyanwu's adaptive strategy and the camouflage show how difficult it is for the "mestiza" to evolve to be free of cultural dominance. Anyanwu shows Doro that mind and body are not separate entities; indeed, she incorporates the "spirit" into the equation through her inclusion capacity that allows for a constant change of perception and identification. Anyanwu also, through her insistence on animals being like people, does not forget about nature. She also builds a bridge between humans and nature.

Anyanwu rejects being the copy of the colonizer and understands how colonization works through mimicry that Bhabha discusses in *The Location of*

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[231] See Aimé Césaire, Clayton Eshleman, and Annette Smith, *Notebook of A Return to The Native Land* (Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2001).
[232] Sandra Govan, "Afterword," in *Wild Seed,* 297.
[233] As cited in Ohmer, "Gloria E. Anzaldúa's Decolonizing Ritual de Conocimiento,"143.

Culture. Anzaldua notices the constraint that feminist of color has put on their movement to decolonize, so she says they have become a copy of what they rejected. Through her decolonial feminism, Anzaldua shows that theories should include everybody; otherwise, it is doomed to decline. She states, "Like the trestle bridge, [a theory] will decline unless we attach it to new growth or append new growth to it."[234] Hence, Anyanwu, like Anzaldua, becomes an agent of change and pursues "the path of Conocimiento" in "spiritual activism." She forces Doro to tackle his negative aspects and the programming he has received from the colonizer's mindset and his own. At the end of this path, she shows only self-respect, love, passion, and contribution to the community. Despite its spiritual connotation, "spiritual activism" results in deconstructing religion and sciences. The collective mindset and sociocultural programming drive the minds into a "cultural trance." Anyanwu takes Doro away from this cultural trance.

From the beginning of the novel, Doro unconsciously fears Anyanwu, resulting in his wish to dominate her. The colonial discourse shows that bodies are separate from the mind and can only be seen as controlling other people. Doro wants to control Anyanwu through her body by threatening her to kill her children to use her body to reproduce more wild seeds like her. However, at the same time, he knows that he cannot control her body since she can quickly efface him through her "shapeshifting" into animal forms. He, also embodying the patriarchal ideology, sees a woman as "the stranger, the other" who is the "man's recognized nightmarish pieces, his Shadow Beast," so "[t]he sight of her sends him into a frenzy of anger and fear."[235] Anyanwu could easily mimic the colonizer since she is a dangerous woman who can kill people whenever she wants. In some parts of the novel, her capabilities have violent potential, like her killing a man because he tried to rape her. However, she does not use violence against Doro. As it is stated that "Anyanwu had never killed anyone except in self-defense. It was not her business to kill. She was a healer."[236] Instead, she performs the duties of a traditional female to ensure

[234] Moraga and Anzaldua, *This Bridge Called My Back*, 1.
[235] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 17.
[236] Butler, *Wild Seed*, 170.

the safety of everybody. Anyanwu "uses prowess rather than direct, confrontational power."[237] She is cut off from the position of power, so she "test limits and set limits for those in power."[238] As Anzaldua states, fear feeds discursive violence; Doro needs to get away from his fear and demolish "The Bridge's walls," which "stand for an incentive to control, to block out the other, the non-self."[239] Anzaldua points to the wall's destruction to prevent any violence. To Anzaldua and Anyanwu, that is the only way to remain en la Frontera and maintain a decolonization movement through love. The necessary counterbalance to the oppressive and controlling regimes' aggression becomes love; only through bi-lingual love can human beings achieve freedom against the structures of domination and subordination.[240] Anyanwu "forces [Doro] to recognize love, to reveal love; through love, she forces him to change."[241] She heals him. Indeed, Doro and Anyanwu share the goal of forming a community. Both are immortal spirits who need each other as their companies. Anyanwu enables Doro to come to terms with the other who is herself. Taking on the third identity allows one to escape the constraints of both the colonizer and the colonized; by threatening him to destroy her body, Anyanwu realizes her commonalities with Doro and his missing humanity. Besides taking on the position of the white plantation owner, she undertakes the role of "mother, older sister, teacher, and when she invited it, lover."[242] As the "mestiza" she has no country, yet as a lesbian and a feminist all women are tied to her as sisters or potential lovers.[243] She calls herself "an act of kneading," a bringing together which also creates someone knew.[244] A creature made up of contradictions questions the boundaries that allow contradiction to exist.[245] Anzaldua regards identity as "a changing cluster of components and shapeshifting activity […] we shift around to

[237] Salvaggio, "Octavia Butler and the Black Science-Fiction Heroine," 81.
[238] Melzer, *Alien Constructions,* 96.
[239] Ohmer, "Gloria E. Anzaldúa's Decolonizing Ritual de Conocimiento," 147.
[240] As cited in Ohmer, "Gloria E. Anzaldúa's Decolonizing Ritual de Conocimiento," 147.
[241] Sandra Y Govan, "Homage to Tradition: Octavia Butler Renovates the Historical Novel," *Melus,* 13, no. 1 (1986): 83.
[242] Butler, *Wild Seed,* 235.
[243] Anzaldua*, Borderlands: La Frontera,* 80.
[244] Ibid., 81.
[245] Ibid., 79.

do the work we have to do, to create the identities we have to live up to our potential."[246] Anyanwu contests "the myth of original unity, fullness bliss and terror, represented by the phallic mother from all humans must separate" by embracing a multiplicity of perspectives."[247] Anyanwu recognizes the importance of showing herself as white to the rest of society to ensure her community's survival. She is still respected in her culture in every guise she takes. Anyanwu represents the oppressed people who try to "negotiate their way through a variety of personal and societal barriers."[248]

Anyanwu nurtures her community that way, combating dehumanization that still saturates modern society. Anzaldua pursues the vision of Cherrie Moraga: "It is in looking to the nightmare that the dream is found. There, the survivor emerges to insist on a future, on a vision, born out of dark and female. The Feminist movement must be a movement of such survivors, a movement with a future."[249] The vision is evident in *Wild Seed,* where Anyanwu embodies possibility and transformation. Her "shapeshifting" allows her to embrace multiple identities, which creates the possibility of resistance against dualistic thinking. Embodying such multiple consciousness helps heal everyone around her.

2.2. READING LAGOON THROUGH CYBORG AND THE MESTIZA

This section will outline the "shapeshifting" and change brought by an alien invasion in *Lagoon*. Anzaldua's *Borderlands* becomes a proper analysis method to discuss Lagos, the center of chaos and cultural mixing. Lagos as the border or the wound attracts extra-terrestrials who bring consciousness and transformation to people. Especially, Ayodele, one of the novel's main characters, becomes the "nagual," the border crosser, and the "cyborg." She transforms Lagos and the

[246] Anzaldua and Keating, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, 211.
[247] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 6.
[248] Salvaggio, "Octavia Butler and the Black Science-Fiction Heroine," 78.
[249] Cherrie Moraga, "La Güera," in *Critical White Studies: Looking Behind the Mirror,* Eds. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1997), 474.

people and is transformed by them at the end. The novel centers on the themes such as survival, adaptation, change, empathy, and difference. The so-called binaries between human and alien, human and animal, nature and culture, science and religion, body and mind are shown as vulnerable. Lagos, as a multicultural place, makes the changes possible. It also revises heteronormative norms with the transformation of the figures such as Chris and Father Oke. The spiritual aim of the "nagual" is achieved by Ayodele and Adaora, who see transforming others as their mission. Gaining consciousness and going against the cultural trauma Ayodele helps to bring awareness to other people. Ayodele becomes a part of every Lagosian, changing everybody immediately by taking action and not reacting. Both Ayodele and Adaora help transform Lagos into a place that centers on difference, community, and knowledge sharing.

Lagoon, published in 2015 by Nnedi Okorafor, tells the story of aliens arriving in Nigeria. It is composed of three sections. "Welcome" (where the aliens meet the humans), "Awakening" (the violence erupts), and "Symbiosis" (the aliens are connected to humans) (they engage in coalition to change the future of Nigeria). The aliens arrive in the ocean, near the city of Lagos, in a lagoon. The main character of the story is the alien messenger Ayodele, who meets Adaora, a marine biologist, Anthony, a musician from Ghana, and Agu, a soldier. Ayodele possesses shape-shifting skills, allowing her to modify her appearance. She shifts between human, animal, and inanimate shapes with ease. The tale has elements of science fiction, fantasy, and folklore. The three human heroes also have exceptional skills: Agu possesses superhuman strength, Adaora surrounds herself with a shield and breathes below the sea, and Anthony can communicate clearly across long distances. The novel also features several Nigerian traditional and mythological beings that manifest physically and engage with the natural world in addition to their supernatural skills. The Yoruba trickster Legba is the deity of words and intersections. She is a skilled 419 fraud who manifests as a ghost. Igbo folklore is woven expertly by Udide Okwanka, a mischievous spider.

Ayodele and her alienness are emphasized through her shapeshifting abilities. Okorafor also like Octavia Butler takes "los atravesados" and "cyborg" as her focus.

Both Ayodele and Adaora are amphibian figures who have their foot on both the land the water. In that case, the readers can observe them as nomadic figures who do not inhabit a specific space in the world. It is stated in the novel that "[Ayodele] swims around the alien home, that was in the water, they could not stay underwater for a long time, they could not breathe it as she could."[250] The "alien home" suggests that the space she inhabits is familiar and strange, which brings back the discussion of the black woman as being the navigators of these different spaces in blurring the lines between categories, as Haraway mentions in her definition of the "cyborg". Since black women inhabit a marginal space like in Anzaldua's *Borderlands*, they represent cyborgs, the shapeshifters who can recreate an environment where difference is celebrated. Henderson states, "the complex situatedness of the black woman as not only 'the other of the same, but also as the 'other' of the other'(s)' implies a relationship of difference and identification with others(s)."[251] *Lagoon* interrupts the multiple sides of othering in her ironic and political representation of the subversive "shapeshifting" figures.

Okorafor brings the African experience by incorporating African myths that "shapeshifting" characters inhabit. Ayodele like Anyanwu resembles the Mami Wata figure. She also embodies technology and change. Okorafor creates a shapeshifter who blurs the boundaries between so-called opposite categories related to objectivity and reason, the other to spirituality. Ayodele is also "made of tiny, tiny, tiny material-like balls" that "can be anything and nothing."[252] Here, Okorafor questions the reliability of the body, which can be anything and nothing. She disrupts the ordinary perception when she states, "there was a flicker of oddness about [Ayodele] if you looked long enough. Like she was more than what she was and less than what she was presenting like a double-exposed photo." [253]

The excess of everything of science and religion is critiqued in the novel. Adaora, a marine biologist, a scientist, hardly ever thinks about her work. She

[250] Nnedi Okorafor, *Lagoon* (New York: Saga Press, 2015), 283, Kindle.
[251] As cited in Nedine Moonsamy, "Fish Out of Water: Black Superheroines in Nnedi Okorafor's *Lagoon*," *Transition* 129 (2020): 175.
[252] Okorafor, *Lagoon*, 19.
[253] Ibid., 198.

assumes her scientist identity: "She shut her eyes, forcing herself to think analytically, calmly, rationally, like the scientist she was."[254] However, the novel does not focus on her being a scientist. She observes and realizes that Ayodele's body disrupts a specific scientific explanation; however, she does not fear her but welcomes her. The readers would expect her to reject Ayodele since a scientist would look at the material and support an organic unity which Ayodele lacks. She thinks, "A college friend of hers used to say that everything human beings perceived as real was only a matter of the information their bodies recorded, and that information isn't always correct or complete."[255] Like the cyborg and the mestiza Ayodele inhabits the contradictions which unsettle everybody around them. Adaora states, "there was something both attractive and repellent about the woman, and it addled Adaora's senses."[256] Ayodele, like the Aztec figure Coatlicue, becomes the "symbol of the fusion of the opposites: the eagle and the serpent, heaven and the underworld, life and death, mobility and immobility, beauty and death."[257]

Ayodele disrupts the categories of so-called masculine technology and feminine body and animal and human. She is the "cyborg" who "signals disturbingly and pleasurably tight coupling" of the so-called binary categories.[258] The "cyborg" embraces "the utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender, which is perhaps a world without genesis, but maybe a world without an end."[259] The concept of unlimited transformation is shown as a valuable aspect of the shapeshifter who refuses to settle into any specific form. Ayodele and Adaora embody the vision of bringing together magic, spirituality, technology, and science to create a new Nigeria in which difference and empathy are cherished.

The shapeshifters and the space, Lagos, acts in a counter-hegemonic way that refuses any hierarchy and celebrates mobility and fluidity. The mobility is expressed in the "alien home" concept where the shapeshifter occupies and tries to flee whenever she wants. The ambiguity of the place is valued too in Okorafor's

[254] Ibid., 11.
[255] Ibid., 31.
[256] Ibid., 11.
[257] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 68-69.
[258] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 152.
[259] Ibid, 150.

description of Lagos as a homogenous place that allows the citizens to be a part of the broader human community. Lagos is like the aliens, the embodiment of a change and possibility where it becomes the product of the relations between; it is like Kristeva's subject-in-process, always in the process of being made. *Lagoon* goes beyond the physical borders of the Earth in its incorporation of the other world and the extra-terrestrials.

Similar to Anzaldua, the space allows the critique of identity, home, and belonging. Humans are not taken to be the primary inhabitants of the Earth, so the space we call home is not the home; it is also the home of the animals. The novel allows the readers to look from the animal's point of view. For example, the swordfish claims that the water of Lagos is also theirs. She calls Lagos home even though she can fee from it whenever she wants. It says, "Even when she migrates, this particular place remains hers. Everyone knows it. She was not born here, but after all the migrations, she is the happiest here."[260] So what makes her home is not where she belongs but where she feels the happiest. *Lagoon* takes the animals no more different than humans or aliens in its depiction. For instance, the swordfish says, "We landed in your waters and have been communicating with other people there."[261] Here, the people refer to not humans but animals. Similarly, *Lagoon* is skeptical of Ayodele's alienness. She states, "you call me alien because I am from space, your outer heavens beyond."[262] They do not relate to aliens as an identity; their neighbor can also be alien; it does not have to be from another planet. Ayodele states that they do not belong to any space; they come and choose to stay in Lagos. The extra-terrestrials "home is [the] bridge, the in-between place of nepantla and constant transition."[263] She says, "we are guests," "who wish to become citizens," and "we chose here."[264] It is no coincidence that they choose Lagos even before the arrival of the aliens; this place has been a cosmopolis. The different languages spoken by Lagosians show the cultural mix of Lagos: "[Adaora] heard people

[260] Okorafor, *Lagoon,* 113.
[261] Ibid., 31.
[262] Ibid., 31.
[263] Anzaldua, "now let us shift…the path of conocimiento…inner work, public acts," 574.
[264] Okorafor, *Lagoon,* 105.

nervously talking, some in Yoruba, one in Igbo, two in Hausa, most in Pidgin English."[265] The narrator gives a detailed description of Bar Beach, which is the first setting:

> […] a perfect sample of Nigerian society. It was a place of mixing. The ocean mixed with the land, and the wealthy mixed with the poor. Bar Beach attracted drug dealers, squatters, various accents and languages, seagulls, garbage, biting flies, tourists, all kinds of religious zealots, hawkers, prostitutes, johns, water-loving children, and their careless parents.[266]

In another description, the narrator says, "Lagos is a big zoo … Everyone is contained by lots of walls and lots of gates, whether you like it or not."[267] The roads of Lagos are deadly, which is personified in the figure of Bone Collector. A road monster is symbolic of the disconnection people feel from each other since people feel the danger of moving from one place to another. The vulnerability of the poor travelers is depicted when they are all packed into the bus. Lagos is a multicultural place like Nigeria, where class division is emphasized. The country is cursed with "soul-crushing corruption."[268] The oil industry is mainly responsible for this corruption which makes the world "bleed black ooze."[269] It results in killing the sea animals or the people of the sea with the people of the land. Thus, Lagos' divisions or "walls" resemble Anzaldua's discussion of the U. S. and Mexican border, which is described as a "thin edge of barbwire" and a "1,950 mid-long open wound."[270] Lagos, like the border, is a wound because it embodies corruption, "depression, illness and death," and these violations attract the extra-terrestrials who want to change the people and the environment. As Ayodele says, "In less than twenty-four hours, I have seen love, hate, greed, ambition and obsession amongst you […] I

[265] Ibid., 10.
[266] Ibid., 1.
[267] Ibid., 27.
[268] Ibid., 269.
[269] Ibid., 107.
[270] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 2.

have seen compassion, sadness, insecurity, art intelligence ingenuity, corruption, curiosity, and violence. This is life. We love life."[271]

Lagos is in a condition similar to Anzaldua's borders, a crisis where two or more forces collide and hold the potential for chaos. The Lagosians, including Adaora, Agu, and Anthony, are "in a continuous status of reiteration of non-belonging, of difference, and of alienation."[272] Lagos is "the place of contradiction, violence, and exploitation."[273] Hate, violence, and aggression drain people of Lagos. The story, for example, is filled with profane and violent language, like "stupid olofofo poke nose woman," "idiot empty-headed girl," and "fuck"[274] This wrath pervades the story, with many of the characters expressing their own bitter stories: scientists or religious people, soldiers, Young people, parishioners, Fisayo, the president's wife, and even the Bone Collector are all outraged and perplexed. Reading *Lagoon* is like entering a world of rage, intricacy, and upheaval. Most Lagos residents experience dysphoric emotions such as rage, indifference, fragility, inactivity and estrangement, bewilderment, and detachment.

The "mestiza" develops the skills of survival where she must learn how to live with ambiguity and contradiction. Ayodele can transform into a mermaid, a swordfish, and various genders and races. She can shapeshift thanks to her advanced technology, "she isn't made of cellular matter."[275] Her body is made up of microscopic "metal balls on glass, shifting and reshaping along with her body"; the metal balls of glass enable Ayodele to have fluidity in changing her body.[276] She can transition into whatever creature she wants. It is stated that the extra-terrestrials can be anything, so they are nothing. For instance, Ayodele is called "this woman … man … whatever" also "this woman, thing, whatever she was."[277] Her body cannot be in any definite place since it escapes any definition like

[271] Okorafor, *Lagoon*, 106.
[272] A. Nasser, "Borderlands as a Site of Resistance in Gloria Anzaldúa's Political Thought," *US Abroad – Journal of American History and Politics* 4, no. 1 (2021): 27.
[273] Okorafor, *Lagoon*, 179.
[274] Ibid., 179.
[275] Ibid., 74.
[276] Ibid., 211.
[277] Ibid., 80.

Anzaldua's "nepantla" and Haraway's "cyborg." Ayodele disrupts the mind and body division by adding the spirit to the equation. At the beginning of the novel, the narrator describes Ayodele from the perspective of a boy:

> [H]e knew it was not human. All his mind would register was the word 'smoke.' At least until the creature walked up to the quiet beach and stepped into the flickering light from one of the restaurants. By then it had become a naked dark-skinned African woman with long black braids.[278]

In this extract, Ayodele is described as a creature having no human features. "[S]he was not human. She was not earthly. She was something completely other. But she was not evil either."[279] Afterwards, she transforms into a woman after coming out of water.

Black Nexus, an LGBT student organization, challenges the conventions when compelled to emerge from obscurity and face societal anxieties about non-conforming gender and sexual identities. Ayodele's "shapeshifting" and speaking to a priest is captured by Jacobs, a trans character and member of Black Nexus. He captures Ayodele's transformation: "She was a young woman, then she seemed to turn inside herself to become a smoky, metallic-looking cloud, then she turned inside out again to become a completely different woman who was old and bent. She'd even spoken with an ancient sounding voice."[280] Black Nexus see Ayodele talking to Father Oke, which excites them because Father Oke generally condemns queers. They see Ayodele as the perfect model for the post-gender world. However, Father Oke thinks that homosexuality is "bestiality" and "the foulest devil."[281] The excitement of Black Nexus is reflected, "The Black Nexus can come out of secrecy for this. Who better to understand than a shape-shifter?"[282] Indeed, as being border figures, aliens and the queers are connected in their marginality. Ayodele's

[278] Ibid., 7.
[279] Ibid., 199.
[280] Ibid., 66.
[281] Ibid., 66.
[282] Ibid., 68.

"shapeshifting" and her courage in facing Father Oke let them come out and become visible. The LGBTQI+ community can relate with Ayodele since her "shapeshifting" is symbolic of their otherness. Like Father Oke, this group also attempts to utilize her as a militant figure furthering their interests. As a result, she avoids any extremes. Indeed, she becomes a balancing figure at the end.

Adaora, like Anyanwu, develops adaptation skills as a "mestiza" who can quickly adapt to the new environment created by the extra-terrestrials. Her path to Conocimiento starts with the trigger of change brought by Ayodele. She learns how to navigate in a new environment. Parallel to Anzaldua, she feels displaced from the beginning before the invasion of the aliens. At the beginning of the novel, Ayodele uttered the trigger of change; the first alien Adaora sees when she says, in Bar Beach, "' Awake…'"[283] When Adaora gains consciousness, the first thing she hears is Ayodele's voice. Adaora fuses with the changing environment when she gives Ayodele her name. She identifies with her; Ayodele's presence makes Adaora project her repulsion onto Ayodele, expressing ambivalent feelings towards her. She defines Ayodele as "attractive" and "repellent."[284] She also recognizes that Ayodele looks like her physically when she shapeshifts. Her eyes penetrating her soul makes her both uncomfortable and calm. Adaora gives Ayodele a name, which means that she already wants to change herself and the environment. Anzaldua expresses this state as the second stage of Conocimiento, where the subject is torn between binaries resulting from internalized oppression. Adaora always turns to science to comfort herself as a marine biologist. As it is stated, "when [Adaora] was afraid, nervous and uncomfortable, all she had to do was focus on the science to feel balanced again."[285]

However, when Adaora meets Ayodele, whose presence cannot be explained through rational thought, she starts the deconstruction process and begins to rewrite herself to overcome such dichotomies. Adaora has always been different as someone born with a webbed foot; however, she loses touch with her inner self,

[283] Ibid., 10.
[284] Ibid., 11.
[285] Ibid., 17.

where society forces her to choose one of her identities. Anzaldua writes, "To pass over the bridge to something else, you'll have to give up partial organizations of self, erroneous bits of knowledge, outmoded beliefs of who you are, your comfortable identities … You'll have to leave parts of yourself behind."[286] She internalizes the shame imposed by the "Anglo/White consciousness," which "hurts women of color casting them as repressed Doppelganger of the psyche"[287] After the arrival of the aliens, she can connect with her amphibian side. Ayodele says, "Adaora, you understand water […] You'll soon also understand something about yourself, and what is to come."[288] When Adaora falls out of the boat, she is not drowned. She starts "breathing water." She becomes aware of her "gills" rather than "lungs." She reconciles with the fact that she is "a marine witch." While Anzaldua embraces the serpent, Adaora embraces the witch. She becomes aware that she does not need to choose either side as a marine biologist, a rational woman who can save the world through scientific observation, or a witch. "Marine" and "witch" are mutually exclusive of each other. She gains la facultad, which is "the capacity to see in surface phenomena the. meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the. surface. It is an instant "sensing," a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning… It is an acute awareness mediated."[289]

When the aliens concurrently kidnap Adaora, Agu, and Anthony, change happens; the aliens set up just one of many dynamic circumstances that develop into commonplace encounters and a collective. That follows the statement of Anzaldua: if one "nepantla" obtains Conocimiento, the way opens up for others. Therefore, Adaora becomes the navigator for the others too. For example, the first time Adaora, Agu, and Anthony meet the aliens, they are collectively seized by a "fist of water" that sucks them into the sea.[290] Okorafor creates commonality between the characters by giving them the names that start with the letter "A." The characters are united in their supernatural traits, which also becomes the reason for

[286] Anzaldua, "now let us shift…the path of conocimiento…inner work, public acts," 556.
[287] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera, 86.*
[288] Okorafor, *Lagoon,* 47.
[289] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera, 38.*
[290] Okorafor, *Lagoon,* 5.

their occupation choice. Although Adaora was born with webbed feet and connected legs like a mermaid, she has a surgical operation to become like a human. Surviving the world as the other, she had to adapt to her environment; however, this does not retract her from becoming a marine biologist. She discovers that she is an amphibian after the aliens' arrival when diving into the water. She returns to her human form on the land. The alien's arrival saves Adaora from "a cultural trance" where she cannot discover her potential as an amphibian. The transformation also connects Adaora with nature; she realizes that to survive on the border, she needs to take down all the borders to question the dominant narratives of oppression.

The aliens embody change, and the change they envision goes against any hierarchy that capitalistic ideology value. Capitalism is "an economic system in which a country's businesses and industry are controlled and run for profit by private owners," which leads to seeing bodies as commodities.[291] Commodification, a by-product of capitalist thinking, "is when the objects, including goods, services, knowledge, or even creatures, come to be provided through and represented in a market transaction."[292] Several characters in the novel try to capitalize on Ayodele by exploiting her body. Father Oke tries every way to show Ayodele as a "witch." The army tries to control Ayodele because they know that she controls the technology. Moziz tries to kidnap Ayodele in exchange for money. Anzaldua writes:

> We are experiencing a personal, global identity crisis in a disintegrating social order that possesses little heart and functions to oppress people by organizing them in hierarchies of commerce and power – a collusion of government, transnational industry, business, and the military all linked by a pragmatic technology and science voracious for money and control.[293]

[291] *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, s.v. "capitalism," accessed June 25, 2022, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/capitalism?q=capitalism
[292] Sungeun Minn, "Commodification," Neoliberalism Guide for Educators, June 25, 2022. http://neolib.uga.edu/commodification.php#:~:text=Commodification%20is%20when%20the%20objects,demand%20in%20the%20general%20market.
[293] Anzaldua, "now let us shift…the path of conocimiento…inner work, public acts," 541.

Many characters in the novel can be deemed the antagonists representing the cultural trance or the disintegrating social order that Adaora awakens. The first character to mention is Father Oke. Adaora's husband Chris is his biggest fan, and he sees Father Oke as a religious leader. Indeed, the Christians respect Father Oke and never doubt his authority or humility, because it is stated that "God speaks through [him]."[294] Father Oke calls Ayodele a "marine witch" and fears her saying that she must be cured. Chris is very much influenced by Father Oke and reflects his fear to Adaora, calling her "the marine witch." Chris also reflects his otherness to his wife and sees her marginal position as hideous because she threatens his masculinity. Father Oke often advises Chris. In one instance, he says, "Break her with your hands, then soften her with flowers."[295] Anzaldua claims:

> Humans fear the supernatural, both the undivine (the animal impulses such as sexuality, the unconscious, the unknown, the alien) and the divine (the superhuman, the god in us). Culture and religion seek to protect us from these two forces. The female, by virtue of creating entities of flash and blood in her stomach (she bleeds every month but does not die) by virtue of being in tune with nature's cycles, is feared. Because, according to Christianity and most other major religions, woman is carnal, animal, and closer to the undivine, she must be protected. Protected from herself. Woman is the stranger, the other. She is man's recognized nightmarish pieces, his Shadow-Beast. The sight of her sends him into a frenzy of anger and fear.[296]

Similar to Anzaldua, Ayodele states, "Human beings have a hard time relating to that which does not resemble them. It's your greatest flaw."[297] Both Anzaldua and Ayodele agree that humans are so integrated into defining the borders that they cannot appreciate the difference. However, Chris and Father Oke use the nickname marine witch to insult Ayodele and Adaora. Also, Zena, the president's wife, calls

[294] Okorafor, *Lagoon*, 38.
[295] Ibid., 38.
[296] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera, 17.*
[297] Okorafor, *Lagoon*, 61.

Ayodele “evil.” She states, “You are evil! Zena [the president's first wife] shouted at Ayodele, who healed the president.”[298] As a result, Zena is enraged by the aliens and terrified of Ayodele's healing abilities. However, according to Adaora, Anthony, and Agu, the insults compliment them to the changing environment. At the end of the novel, that is why Adaora reflecting on her previous experience with the aliens, proudly confesses that indeed she is a marine witch. Thus, Adaora is willing to adapt to change. Unlike Chris and Father Oke, she does not see aliens' arrival cursing but as a way to recover from the chaos where colonization happens. She is aware that recovery can happen only when the opposites clash, or in Anzaldua’s words, un frentamento. Adaora’s survival instinct is the catalyst for that change in which she understands the value of universality where innate desires can be fulfilled. Her awakening becomes possible to set herself free from embodying one label. Indeed, she realizes she is more than a woman, a biologist, or a witch. She defines herself freely and gains an authentic expression. She chooses to be a marine witch based on how she experiences her body. The alien’s vision for humanity brings the freedom of expression of one’s body and enables one to see gender roles as superseded.

The characters Chris and Jacobs’s conflicted thoughts can be observed in the novel regarding the new definitions of gender articulation. Aliens provide them with an environment where they can re-establish their expression of gender. The introduction of the novel signals the transformative potential of the aliens, where a sea creature gives details of its physical transformation. The sea creature reflects on its life and expresses its need for survival in a place full of corruption and pollution. The narrator writes:

> They (the aliens) made her eyes like the blackest stone, and she can see deep in the ocean and high into the sky […] she can make spikes of cartilage jut out along her spine as if she is some ancestral creature from the deepest ocean caves of old. [...] She is a monster.[299]

[298] Ibid., 214.
[299] Ibid., 162.

The same creatures witness the transformation of an octopus with a missing tentacle that "grows its missing tentacle back and what look[s] like bony spokes erupt from its soft head."[300] The change is the foreshadowing of the change in the human environment. The possibility is already expressed from the beginning by the narrator. The change in perspectives of Chris and Jacobs can be observed in the next section.

Seeing Adaora helping the alien community, Father Oke advises Chris saying that women are "weak vessels...She could not change herself if she tried."[301] Subsequently, Moziz starts to plan this scheme to kidnap Adaora thinking that she is weak and has no harm. These characters express the traditional gender roles that heteronormative society enforces. Hence, in their eyes, a strong woman or a man who cross-dresses into a woman becomes a threat. Jacobs cross-dresses and engages in a genderqueer "shapeshifting." Jacob lives a double life where he engages in a manly discussion with his male friends. Also, in his private life, he enjoys wearing woman clothes: "He loved the colors, the feel, the material, the creativity, and, oooh, the fit."[302] Jacobs is also a member of the LGBTQIA+ group called the Black Nexus. Jacobs conflicted perspective can be seen in his different interactions with the characters and groups, especially when he views Ayodele's video in which she performs shapeshifting. First, Jacobs sees the video along with the group of Moziz. The readers learn that Moziz's girlfriend Philomena recorded the video. After he sees the video, she starts his plans to kidnap Ayodele. He sees Ayodele's "shapeshifting" and body as a commodity where his aim only is to "be rich."[303] Jacobs also sends this video to his friends in Black Nexus. The reaction is different in this group. In this scene, the readers also observe the ambivalence of Jacobs, where he wears a Black dress and high heels but is concerned about his Pidgin English which is a sign of heterosexuality, according to him. While Moziz's group wants to kidnap Ayodele after seeing the video, Black Nexus wants to use it for their representation. One of the members says, "The Black Nexus can come out

[300] Ibid., 259.
[301] Ibid., 29.
[302] Ibid., 67.
[303] Ibid., 81.

of secrecy for this. Who better to understand than a shape-shifter?'"[304] The Black Nexus see Ayodele's "shapeshifting" as indicative of a sinister force. This force, they believe, can disturb the status quo. Jacobs, then like Ayodele, can be seen as the crucial figure who engages in the transgression of gender expression, which goes against the traditional construction of gender in Lagos. The readers observe the conflicted thoughts of the border figure who cannot envision a future, even after seeing Ayodele's video more than fifty times. He cannot imagine a space for himself where he can freely involve in a shapeshifting activity between different expressions of gender. The readers see Moziz as one of the representatives of the heteronormative culture, giving no change to Jacobs the chance to express himself freely. Anzaldua states that the border figures are "strip[ped] [them] of self-worth; [their] vulnerability exposes [them] to shame."[305] His conflicted thoughts are reflected in the novel. Jacobs wants to join the LGBTQIA+ community; however, "he didn't want Moziz, Troy, and Tolu, who knew nothing about his cross-dressing, to see….For the first time in his life, he was immensely proud and intensely ashamed at the same time"[306] Later in the novel, the readers observe the violence of heteronormativity where Moziz shoots Jacobs killing him. However, the novel is not pessimistic since later, Moziz is also killed by an alien other. The novel condemns the attitude of Moziz and gives readers the hope that alien invasion indeed can bring change and end gendered oppression and violence.

Moreover, Chris, a survivor of a plane crash, is religiously converted by Father Oke. As being reflected as a misogynist and an abuser engages in a false interpretation of Christianity where he tries to maintain his status quo. The readers observe the strong influence Father Oke has on Chris because before meeting him; he was a supportive partner who respected Adaora's career choice and saw her as his equal. Thus, he never aimed to control her. The alien invasion triggers the old Chris, maintaining empathy and compassion. Chris also experiences Conocimiento. The violence of Father Oke triggers him to view him in a different light. One

[304] Ibid., 68.
[305] Ibid., 88.
[306] Ibid., 86.

instance, one soldier shoots Chris and the daughter Kola injuring her fatally. The incident causes Chris and Adaora to establish a new relationship where "[t]hey looked into each other's eyes for several seconds. Then Chris nodded at Adaora, and she nodded back."[307] Also, Ayodele's healing of Kola triggers another change in Chris where he sees aliens from a different perspective. Chris understands that the ultimate threat does not come from aliens; it comes from cruel people scared of the unknown and change. From then on, Chris has interactions with the aliens. He does not see them as witches or evil beings anymore but sees them as the members of Lagos. Chris is reborn after his experience with the aliens, where he proudly looks at Adaora at the conference. He starts seeing her as a subject rather than a gendered being that belongs to him. Even towards the end of the novel, Father Oke is healed. He also since he feels bad for punching a woman, he changes: "He felt his heart break. Why had he slapped that woman so hard yesterday morning?"[308]

Later in the novel, the readers observe the aliens aim to communicate with people on land and create a community where interdependence and support rather than violence become the key point. Ayodele believes only when people interact and value many forms of difference is change possible: "We come to bring you together and refuel your future."[309] As soon as the Elders, the aliens, land in Lagos, they express their goal to bring change and desire to integrate with humans. The aliens rejoice in difference since they are not homogenous but heterogeneous. They create a multicultural environment. Some aliens are from Africa, some from Asia, and some from the rest of the world. The Lagosians welcome the aliens. For example, nine aliens visit Chris' home, where his aunt cooks for them. They see alien invasion as valuable in terms of their beliefs and traditions. The aliens heal the community, including the president. The aliens use advanced technology to transfer the president's speech to everybody's technological devices, computers, televisions, and mobile phones. He declares to the community that aliens indeed do not bring harm and welcomes them. He encourages Lagosians to see them as the

[307] Ibid., 130.
[308] Ibid., 229.
[309] Ibid., 107.

members of Lagos. While the aliens become part of Lagos, they change individuals by tapping into their desires. They enforce the belief that by learning to actualize the self, they can change everybody and be changed by them. The alien's camouflage and adaptation skills enable the Lagosians to improve their environment, including people and nature. The aliens' philosophy reflects Octavia Butler's words, where she writes, "All that you touch. You Change. All that you Change. Changes you. The only lasting truth is Change. God is Change."[310]

Furthermore, the novel depicts the change as challenging. The mechanical process and grating sound suggestive of shattering bones make the change appear painful to Ayodele as well.[311] As a result, the loudness of the shifting process kills numerous marine animals and terrifies Lagos residents: "As she (Ayodele) happily swims away in triumph, the loudest noise she's ever heard vibrates through the water. MOOM …several smaller fish, jellyfish, even crabs, float, belly up or dismembered."[312] In the last scene, the readers witness the suffering of Ayodele by the human violence. The soldiers beat Ayodele, which is described graphic by Okorafor to show how violent humans can be. It is stated that "[Ayodele's] white dress was splotched with spreading patches of red as they stamped on her torso, chest, legs, and arms. They crushed bone and muscle, and organs. One man brought his foot down squarely on her exposed neck."[313] Although she can easily kill the soldiers, she chooses not to. In the novel, violence is only used as a strategy for survival or to bring justice. For example, Agu leaves the army, and eventually runs across Adaora and Anthony. He tries to stop the chief "from raping a woman" by hitting his commander, the president's nephew.[314] Ayodele refuses to react to the soldiers; instead, she chooses to act. Ayodele, in the end, resolves to radically alter people's lives by becoming a part of their bodies and thoughts.: She explains her decision in a lower tone: she is not a solitary creature but rather a collective member. Ayodele, as the nagual, changes people's perspectives by transforming herself into

[310]Octavia E Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1993), 3.
[311] Okorafor, *Lagoon*, 131.
[312] Ibid., 128.
[313] Ibid., 260.
[314] Ibid., 20.

a fog. Everyone in Lagos inhales the fog: "a white mist swirled, as if a fog had rolled in off the water...And instinctively [Adaora] knew that this fog was rolling like a great wave over all of Lagos...And everyone in Lagos was inhaling it."[315] Even the soldiers who attack Ayodele change in a minute where their expression changes from aggression into shame. The narrator talks about Femi, one of the characters in the novel, "He'd inhaled the fog like everyone else, and he'd immediately felt a shift. In perspective, in memory."[316] Ayodele's essence encourages balance and erases the hierarchy in the community. In *Lagoon,* the alien community does not have a power structure where everybody is seen as equals and rejoices in difference. Thus, the text also blurred the lines between colonizer and colonized. There are the Elders; however, they are not seen as authorities. When Adaora, Agu, and Anthony meet the Elders, they talk about integrating into society and co-existing together. Thus, the Lagosians all inhale the fog, and they become aliens; as Ayodele says to Lagosians, "you'll all be a bit … alien."[317] In the end, both the aliens and the Lagosians undertake transformation. They engage in mutual change. Ayodele's goal is to raise awareness: "My people sent me for a reason. We are a collective. Every part of us, every tiny universe within us, is conscious. I am we, I am me […]"[318] In the end, the president of Nigeria also acknowledges this who says, "people of Lagos, especially look at your neighbor. See his race, tribe, or his alien blood. And call him brother. We have much work to do as a family."[319] Also, he says that alien invasion becomes the rebirth of Lagos: "Last night, Lagos burned. But like a phoenix, it will rise from the ashes – a greater creature than ever before."[320] The rebirth after death heals Lagos, which Anzaldua calls "the Coatlicue State." The pain is transformed into an increase in consciousness. Similarly, Adaora experiences the Coatlicue state since she gains a new consciousness and realizes that she is not fully human. Therefore, she has to experience a social death to be reborn again.

[315] Ibid., 263.
[316] Ibid., 280.
[317] Ibid., 262.
[318] Ibid., 262.
[319] Ibid., 270.
[320] Ibid., 270.

Not only the humans but also the animal life and nature are restored. The aliens use technology not to hurt any Lagosians. Instead, it is productive and shared by everyone. The capitalist production and consumption, which values the capital, destroy nature and water, once "delicious."[321] Additionally, under current political and economic contexts, consuming culture generates different social classes, exerting much stress on different parts of society, resulting in "African chaos."[322] The colonizers who abused Africa's natural resources are not the same as the alien invaders. The aliens fix oil contamination in the water, but they do not want to conquer. Instead, they begin a positive dialogue with the Lagos residents. They engage in curing water because water represents fluidity and change, like in the novel *Wild Seed*. Anzaldua describes the sea as wild and destructive: "silver waves marbled with spume/gashing a hole under the border fence."[323] She sees the sea as a threat to the physical border and the idea of the border itself. It is no coincidence that, in the end, Father Oke is taken to the water by Mami Wata.

The limits between science fiction, fantasy, and horror are blurred in *Lagoon*, which in a sense, reflects the storyline of *Wild Seed* and parallels how race, gender, and sexuality boundaries are contested by alien/human shapeshifters. The novel is defined to be an African-futurist novel, not an afro-futurism. The distinction is clear-cut by Nnedi Okorafor, who states in her blog post:

> Africanfuturism is concerned with visions of the future, is interested in technology, leaves the Earth, skews optimistic, is centered on and predominantly written by people of African descent (black people) and it is rooted first and foremost in Africa. It's less concerned with "what could have been" and more concerned with "what is and can/will be".[324]

[321] Ibid., 146.
[322] Ibid., 206.
[323] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera, 1*.
[324] N Okorafor, "Africanfuturism Defined," 2019, Nnedi.blogspot.com http://nnedi.blogspot.com/2019/10/africanfuturism-defined.html.

Thus, resembling its genre features, *Lagoon* and its "shapeshifting" characters envision a better future for Nigeria and, in general, for humanity which is full of possibility and potential for change. However, *Lagoon* is different because it brings all the different perspectives together. An omniscient narrator whose style is forward. Her name is Udide, The Great Spider, who weaves the story together. She describes herself:

> I am the unseen. For centuries, I have been here. Beneath this great city, this metropolis. I know your language. I know all languages. Legba is my cousin, and he has taught me well. My cave is broad and cool. The sun cannot send its heat down here. The damp soil is rich and fragrant. I turn softly on my back and place my eight legs to the cave's ceiling. Then, I listen. I am the spider. I see sound. I feel taste. I hear touch. I spin the story. This is the story I've spun. […] I have been spinning these stories in this cave for centuries. I've spun the birth and growth of this great city. Watched through the vibrations that travel through my webs. Lagos. Nigeria. I know it all because I created it all. I have seen people come from across the ocean. I have seen people sell people. I've knitted their stories and watched them knit their own crude webs.[325]

The Spider understands human languages and can weave together divergent voices and stories to form a reasonably logical narrative, similar to how it weaves webs. The Spider bridges the gap between humans and non-humans. It also can act outside of space and time. It resembles the cyborg's ability to create "webs" that can bring different perspectives together. Moreover, the Spider observed the coming of Europeans and the slave trade, as evidenced by what it says above. This power to transcend space and time challenges our preconceived notions of time and space. Like the polyglot nomad, she exists "between languages, constituting a vantage point in deconstructing identity."[326] She is "in transit between the languages neither here nor there." In that case, Udide resembles Ayodele, who speaks many different

[325] Okorafor, *Lagoon*, 284.
[326] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 8.

languages when questioned by Kola, the daughter of Adaora. She can quickly speak English, Igbo, or other languages. When asked if Ayodele can speak Russian too, she says, "if I can get close to someone who can [speak] it, yes."[327] Indeed, in one instance in the book, Ayodele is referred to by Adaora as a spider. She says that Ayodele "had piercing brown eyes that gave Adaora the same creepy feeling as when she looked at a large spider."[328] Although Adaora finds it scary at first, neither the narrator Udide nor Ayodele try to have power over Nigeria, Udide becomes the part of the story, and Ayodele becomes the part of the Lagosians. They do not become the new Christian gods. Ayodele says, "No, no, not all the Christian stuff […] But the mystery."[329] Indeed, she claims that their aim is spiritual. Lagos has become a place of mingling. The narrator says, "Lagos is no man's land. Nobody owns Lagos, We all own Lagos. Lagos will never be destroyed."[330] As Anzaldua, Okorafor takes her work as a person, she does not tell the stories, but they do so: her work "has an identity; it is a 'who' or a 'what,' and contains the presence of persons, that is the incarnations of gods and ancestors or natural or cosmic powers."[331]

To conclude, the alien invasion brings change and transforms the people, nature, and the environment. Ayodele and Adaora help others to negotiate differences which go against "[t]he feminist dream of a common language" which "like all dreams for a perfectly true language, of perfectly faithful naming of experience, is a totalizing and imperialist one."[332] Thus, Ayodele and Adaora's mission is similar to the cyborg's, focusing on partialities. Nnedi Okorafor, like Octavia Butler, manages to achieve a cyborg writing which expresses "the power to survive, not based on original innocence but based on seizing the tools that marked them as other."[333] However, Okorafor and Butler acknowledge Audre Lorde's caution regarding the master's tool. They seize the tools in a way that they

[327] Okorafor, *Lagoon,* 62.
[328] Ibid., 11.
[329] Ibid., 152.
[330] Ibid., 171.
[331] Anzaldua*, Borderlands: La Frontera,* 67.
[332] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 173.
[333] Ibid., 175.

are not reactive but active in facing the norms where they show "to be One is to be an illusion, and so to be involved in the apocalypse with the other."[334] Udide, the Great Spider, and the narrator prefer to "be a cyborg than a goddess."[335] Through Ayodele and Adaora, *Lagoon* shows that bodies are not pre-given phenomena but change according to personal experience. The identities, categories, or relationships are shown to be always in process, not complete. Also, through characters such as Jacobs, the novel exploits definite gender expressions which become performative. *Lagoon* values possibility, constant transformation, difference, exchange, and communication. It shows that everybody, either human or nonhuman, depends on each other in survival. Lagos becomes a center of political action where the "woman of color" becomes a term defining a strategic position for pursuing change or a "conscious strategy" for the alliance. Lagos embodies the Anzalduan border, which "become[s] the location of thinking and releasing the fears constructed by national intellectuals toward what may come from the outside"[336] Thus, Lagos embodying the possibility and constant transformation will heal the violence and corruption by being the bridge for everybody. Anzaldua also anticipates the future similar to Lagos' where she writes, "May the roaring force of our collective creativity/ heal the wounds of hate, ignorance, indifference/ dissolve the divisions creating a chasm between us/ … sabemos que Podemos transformer este mundo/ filled with hunger, pain, and war/ into a sanctuary of beauty, redemption and possibility … "[337]

[334] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 181.
[335] Ibid., 84.
[336] As cited in Ohmer, "Gloria E. Anzaldúa's Decolonizing Ritual de Conocimiento," 149.

[337] Anzaldua, "now let us shift…the path of conocimiento…inner work, public acts," 575-76.

CONCLUSION

The thesis aims at discussing two sci-fiction novels, *Lagoon* and *Wild Seed*. It has used the "borderlands theory," which "may be viewed as the offspring of two iconoclastic Western foremothers: Gloria Anzaldua and Donna Haraway."[338] The metaphors of "cyborg" and "mestiza" are shown to be transgressive and political figures which can pose a threat to the dominant cultural order. In this respect, both "cyborg" and "mestiza" are read as figures on the margins. As they embody distinctive and contradictory meanings, the transformation process is celebrated. Haraway's and Anzaldua's theorization of "cyborg" and the "mestiza" has enabled the gathering of the fixated ideas to dislocate themselves, reinforcing the shapeshifting quality itself expresses possibility and transformation.

Gloria Anzaldua takes "the mestiza" as the mediator whose body includes multiple limbs and whose foot is on contradictory grounds, one in the dark, another in the white, one in the heterosexual society, another in the gay world, one in the women another in the men. However, Anzaldua shows that the labels or the differentiations are the strategies that try to divide one identity from another to reinforce a violent culture. The contradictory stance of the “mestiza” creates a new consciousness: a “mestiza consciousness” where the subject can gain the understanding and knowledge of the other. The “mestiza” represents the struggle of external borders that translates into an internal struggle. It also represents the transition between cultural formations and, therefore, the tolerance towards contradictions and ambiguity. However, that ambivalence is usually resolved in ongoing painful events since the “mestiza consciousness” is the synthesis of identities which is not the sum of the parts, emerges from a continuous creative movement that breaks the unitary aspect of any new paradigm. Also, the “mestiza” is displaced; it has no country which relates it to the abject. She is both familiar and not. To gain multiple consciousnesses, the mestiza has to follow “the path of Conocimiento” and reach the nahual state where she becomes the shaper of her soul

[338] Spurgeon, "The Cyborg Coyote: Generating Theory in the Borderlands," 9.

and others. She has the skills of mediation which consists of closing the gap that separates people, white from colored, women from men. She creates a chain reaction where she engages in “spiritual activism” by helping herself and others to transform themselves and each other.

“Cyborg” is another political metaphor that questions the dualistic Western thought of unitary logic. In "A Cyborg Manifesto," Haraway emphasizes hybridity and contradiction. It produces bodies and meanings present in the borders, compared to considering the woman's body as ontologically limited. Cyborgs are not an exception to Haraway's claim that bodies are maps of power and identity. For Haraway, all language, including mathematics, is figurative, and metaphors are its tools in questioning the identifications and certainties, thus opening new historical possibilities. The “cyborg” metaphor blurs three conceptions: the border between the human and the animal, the barrier between organisms and machines, and the one that marks the limits between the physical and the non-physical. The “cyborg” rejoices in the confusion about borders and warns people to take responsibility for its construction. It is a monster, a bastard, illegitimate son of capitalism, patriarchy, militarism, and state socialism, but bastards are not always faithful to their origins because they go beyond historical construction. The myth of origins and the logic of naturalized representation have constructed the experience. Haraway insists that feminist practices today must undertake the task of encoding the self, which is represented by the “cyborg,” a personal, postmodern self, collective. The “cyborg” continually disassembles and reassembles the so-called categories. The call to responsibility and action from “the belly of the monster” creates an environment of unification and equal empowerment.

Both Anzaldua and Haraway has shown to reflect on boundaries. Anzaldua discusses borders on two levels which are geographical and emotional. The geographical border she writes about is between Mexico and the United States. The cultures of both cultures mix and create a border identity. However, the geographical border also creates the emotional border where the “mestiza” is forced to negotiate different and contradictory identities. As a “mestiza” herself, Anzaldua

takes the border as a transition place that is not comfortable to inhabit. She also explores the border to reflect on the slipperiness of identity in which the categories of identity can be questioned since there is no identity unaffected by the environment. Haraway also encourages the readers to rejoice in the confusion of boundaries and reveals to them see that they are responsible for the creation of such boundaries.

Haraway also has defined certain borders such as gender, race, class, animals, humans, and machines. She takes "cyborg" as Anzaldua's "mestiza," which confuses the boundaries since it is outside of human history and is not susceptible to the rules of "original unity." Thus, as a "mestiza writer," Anzaldua can be a "cyborg writer" since she also does not conform to any unity. As Savi states:

> Anzaldúa is herself a cyborg writer, as she devises technologies of engagement with both the Mexican and the American side of her, perhaps because she understands that there is no one pure identity after all: there is no one pure object (be it a subject, an idea, an identity, a representation, even matter) unaffected by its surroundings.[339]

As "cyborg" Anzaldua as the "mestiza" becomes a negotiator. Anzaldua states, "I am an act of kneading, of uniting and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings."[340] She embodies the metaphors of "cyborg" and "the mestiza" by developing technologies such as writing to connect with everything around her; however, she also questions the same categories.

Another relationship between Anzaldua and Haraway has been drawn in discussing the "women of color." Haraway claims that "women of color" can be

[339] Melina Pereira Savi, "How Borders Come to Matter? The Physicality of the Border in Gloria Anzaldua's Borderlands: La Frontera," *Florianópolis* 20, no. 2 (2015): 182.
[340] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 81.

taken to represent "cyborg identity" since they embody a "potent subjectivity synthesized from fusions of outsider identities and in the complex political-historical layerings of her 'biomyhtography.'"[341] By inhabiting the border, "mestiza" has to develop specific survival skills of negotiation like a "cyborg" whose "writing is about the power to survive, not based on original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools that marked the world that marked them as other."[342]

Anzaldua's deconstruction of gender roles has been likened to a "cyborg," whereas being a Chicana allows one to see the world from female and male perspectives. She criticizes the norm by stating:

> Contrary to some psychiatric tenets, half and halfs are not suffering from a confusion of sexual identity, or even confusion of gender. What we are suffering from is an absolute despot duality that says we are able to be only one or the other. It claims that human nature is limited and cannot evolve into something better.[343]

Although the norms force her to have one identity, she claims more than a Mexican, an American, or a woman. Like "cyborg," she uses the technology of writing to resist the practices of the First World. She also questions her origins since she is an outsider in her culture, being a homosexual. Therefore, "cyborg consciousness" has been shown similar to "mestiza consciousness" since both claim multiple consciousnesses where negotiation of duality is valued. Both Anzaldua and Haraway find this consciousness valuable because they perceive it as empowering, contrary to the dominant discourse. Being a border figure has been reflected to be something weakening; however, both Haraway and Anzaldua manage to subvert it by enabling the subject to have the agency. Because they think that by having

[341] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 174.
[342] Ibid., 175.
[343] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 19.

multiple consciousnesses, one can interact with the world better. As Anzaldua states, the problem of the subject in boundary:

> We do not make full use of our faculties. We abnegate. And there in front of us is the crossroads and choice: to feel a victim where someone else is in control and therefore responsible and to blame […] or to feel strong, and for the most part, in control.[344]

The problem of the subject in boundary has been explored in *Wild Seed* and *Lagoon* with the metaphor of shapeshifting.

Octavia Butler's *Wild Seed* and Nnedi Okorafor's *Lagoon*, two science fiction novels, focus on "shapeshifting" characters. "Shapeshifting" has enabled the writers to question the body's stability and the unitary subject proposed by the dominant narrative. The notions of the freedom of choice and agency has been discovered through the metaphor of "shapeshifting." In *Wild Seed*, Butler portrays two different shapeshifting characters: Doro and Anyanwu, which are supposed to represent a patriarch and a matriarch or an enslaver and an enslaved person. Anyanwu, which is referred to as a goddess, utilizes survival skills such as adaptation and camouflage to protect herself and her children from the genetic engineering of Doro. Both characters can inhabit different bodies; however, Anyanwu is a "wild seed," and she can not only change her appearance but also read other bodies by gaining understanding. Doro finds Anyanwu threatening but is attracted to her because he can use her as a valuable reproductive agent. However, she threatens Doro because he cannot detect her when she transforms into an animal. Doro is a "cyborg" but a faulty one who cannot see the humanity in others and only see them as objects to be used. Anyanwu, on the other hand, goes against the categories of male and

[344] Anzaldua, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 21.

female, master and slave, animal and human by inhabiting contradictory states. Thus, she has been elaborated as the beneficial "cyborg" that Haraway values.

Lagoon has covered different characters focusing on a shapeshifter Ayodele who is an alien. Like Anyanwu in *Wild Seed*, she can transform her body into different shapes, especially in animals like the swordfish. She blurs the so-called binary categories like the "cyborg" such as the masculine science and feminine body, human and animal. She becomes the agent of change in transforming Lagos, which can be likened to the "Borderlands" of Anzaldua in its multicultural environment. Ayodele and the alien invasion has been shown to change everyone in Lagos, making it possible for Adaora, another superpower figure, to discover multiple consciousnesses. The shape-shifting characters are depicted in the third space that Bhabha discusses. They are constantly negotiating and interacting, which results in hybridity. It follows that the identities are revealed to be ill-defined, tormented, and fluctuating on both sides of the split, undermining the claims of a unified self. The characters' shapeshifting allows them to be in a continuous state of creation and reconstruction. They are thus in the third space of cultural negotiation and transition as their cultural identities change.

Ayodele, Anyanwu, and Adaora has been reflected as "abject" figures subject to fear in their society. They like the Coatlicue, the "mestiza," the "cyborg" who fuses the opposites by inhabiting and going between contradictory states. They are seen as attractive and repellent, otherworldly creatures, witches who inhabit different cultures. Anyanwu is revered as a goddess and a witch. Anyanwu and Adaora are referred to as marine witches. All the characters are fluid and mobile: Anyanwu can shapeshift into animals and escape Doro, while Ayodele is made of cellular matter, which can be everything and nothing. On the other hand, Adaora is a human with webbed feet, which enables her to negotiate her different identities. For all the characters, the symbol of water is significant because it enables them to move freely in different states and gives them agency. Adaora is a marine biologist, and Ayodele and Anyanwu transform themselves into sea creatures. The transformation into animals enables the writers to question humanity. Dubey states:

> Afro-diasporic as well as Euro-American women's science fiction exploits the trope of becoming animal not only to explore the implications of (black people and woman) being identified with animal nature, but also to call into question dualistic and overlapping oppositions between nature and culture, magic and science, animal and human, body and mind, female and male, European and African, and so forth.[345]

On the other hand, the characters have been shown to disregard the opposition of science and witchcraft or mind and spirit through "shapeshifting." Both Okorafor and Butler "use "'magic' and 'witchcraft' to legitimate distinctively female bodies of knowledge that are discredited by the standards of modern Western science."[346] Anyanwu shapeshifts by studying herself down to the atoms, which can be likened to Adaora being a scientist who studies Ayodele's body which is not made of cellular matter. Hence, Adaora and Anyanwu are both scientists who are also referred to as witches. The quality of them being scientists and witches enables them to negotiate the so-called binary categories.

The worlds Adaora, Ayodele, and Anyanwu inhabit have been explored as violent places. In *Wild Seed*, Doro's genetic engineering and the imagery of slaves are the instances of violence where people are forced into reproduction. In *Lagoon*, Lagos is a violent place full of pollution and homophobia, as reflected in the figure of the Bone Collector. The violent spaces have been shown to trigger the transformation in both novels, where Doro's massacre of Anyanwu's children leads Anyanwu to suicide and create awareness. On the other hand, the alien invasion and the influence of Ayodele make it possible for Adaora to realize her feared identity and the crisis in Lagos.

To deal with violence and crisis, the abject figures of *Lagoon* and *Wild Seed* have followed an adaptive strategy to resist the dominant narrative. Anyanwu,

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[345] Madhu Dubey, "Becoming Animal in Black Women's Science Fiction," in *Afro-Future Females: Black Writers Chart Science Fiction's Newest New-Wave Trajectory*, eds. Marleen S. Barr, Columbus (OH: Ohio State University Press, 2008), 35.
[346] Ibid., 36.

inhabiting an Igbo identity, first adapts to her environment by learning the English language, changing her name, and transforming her body into a white man. She evades violence such as rape and abuse by being undetectable by Doro. She transforms herself into a dolphin and blends in with their family. On the other hand, in *Lagoon,* Adaora accepts the alien's offer in the transformation; instead, she is willing to be uncomfortable by reconnecting with her amphibian side. Ayodele already knows the languages in Lagos; she transforms herself into different people, whether men or women. On the opposite, Doro in *Wild Seed* is a static figure who does not welcome change since he commodifies and categorizes people and kills the ones who are not helpful in his genetic engineering plans. He cannot read bodies and understand them, so he transforms himself by inhabiting their bodies. Similarly, in *Lagoon,* Chris and Father Oke do not tolerate multiple identities where they reinforce Adaora and Ayodele as the other. They are neither tolerant towards the Black Nexus nor Jacobs, who embody fluidity and resistance towards religion, capitalism, and heteronormativity.

Both novels have been shown to destabilize the gender identity's relation to the biological body. Anyanwu's androgynous nature enables her freedom and agency when she chooses to be either female or male. She also goes against the heteronormative understanding of gender identity by engaging in homosexuality. Although the novel portrays Anyanwu as the matriarch and Doro as the patriarch, Butler shows the significance of agency. Although Anyanwu is hyperfeminized, she has masculine abilities. When she wants to submit to Doro and his plans, she chooses to do so to survive. She shows the freedom of choice in one's actions in contrast to Doro, who acts as a master in his treatment of his slaves. Also, in *Lagoon,* transgression of gender expression can be observed in the figure of Jacob, where he cross-dresses.

Ayodele, Adaora, and Anyanwu have been explored to represent transformation and change, which is the characteristic of the “mestiza,” “the nagual,” and the “cyborg.” In *Wild Seed,* Anyanwu is transformed by the violence of Doro, and she transforms him, too. By threatening Doro to kill herself, she

enables him to face his inherent fear and insecurities. Instead, Doro realizes that he values Anyanwu not only as a "wild seed" but also as a companion whom they meet as being the others. In *Lagoon*, transformation starts with the alien invasion. First, Adaora comes to terms with her contradictory identities. Afterwards, Father Oke and Chris are transformed after the soldiers kill Ayodele. Being part of the Lagosians and making them "aliens," Ayodele changes everybody around her. Thus, Ayodele and Anyanwu are analyzed as spiritual activists or "the nagual" who have the consciousness of duality and a certain creative power to kindle a change in others. However, the change in both novels have not been shown to be easy. Anyanwu threatens to kill herself while Anyanwu is killed and tortured by the soldiers. Both characters must experience a social death to be reborn again. Although facing such violence, the "shapeshifting" characters do not react but act where they show the significance of existing together in differences. Ramirez states, "Butler utilizes science fiction to scrutinize power relations (i.e., social hierarchies based on race, gender, and sexuality), and to explore ways of subverting and/or destroying power without replacing or reproducing it."[347] The statement has also been shown to be true for *Lagoon*, where Lagos becomes a space of mingling, possibility, and constant transformation. Anyanwu and Ayodele, referred to as the healers, display that through mutual transformation and awareness of the other, one can "heal the wounds of hate, ignorance, indifference" and "dissolve the divisions creating a chasm" instead of valuing "redemption and possibility."[348]

Given this context, the terms "cyborg" and "mestiza," studied by Haraway and Anzaldua, are critical metaphors for the subject who represents various, fluctuating, and contradicting social and subject positions. The wonderful metaphors and ideas of Haraway and Anzaldua are evident and skillfully transferred in Octavia Butler and Nnedi Okorafor's science fiction *Wild Seed* and *Lagoon*. As a theoretical foundation for analysis, the study aimed to study two intersectional texts: Haraway's *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*:

[347] Ramírez, "Cyborg Feminism: The Science of Octavia E. Butler and Gloria Anzaldúa," 378-379.
[348] Anzaldua, "now let us shift…the path of conocimiento…inner work, public acts," 575-76.

"Situated Knowledges" and "Cyborg Manifesto," and Anzaldua's *Borderlands/ La Frontera* and This *Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation.* Following borderlands theory, it aimed to critically examine the novels, investigating the crossings of multiple identities of race, gender, and sexuality. Regarding identity politics, Butler and Okorafor confront opposing gender, race, and sexual identity politics by authorizing their characters with "shapeshifting" skills to rearrange unique linkages of power and authenticity. The queer, hybrid, and alien characters are shown to capture the possibilities envisioned in Haraway's "cyborg" and Anzaldua's "mestiza" by executing the mission of the "nagual," which is creative and transforming. Anyanwu, Adaora, and Ayodele utilize the condition of the liminal subject, which is seen to be limited by the dominant narrative, to create a change in the perspectives of the society, which is full of sexism, homophobia, hate, and violence. The genre of science fiction enables the writers to create an environment where they can show how dualities are possibly transcended in a world full of violence where the quality of empathy between the subjects is valued. As embodying the metaphors of "cyborg" and "the mestiza" the shapeshifting characters of *Wild Seed* and *Lagoon* express Kristeva's subject-in-process where the subject has been conceived as a process always constructing and negotiating the self and the other. In that aspect they embody transformation and change. They appear in third space where they exist beyond the so-called categories such as the colonizer and the colonized in their representation of hybridity. Borrowing Kristeva's terms, "abject" figures, thought as often feared and disregarded, gain agency and intend to create their bodies.[349] This search itself highlights both thematically and structurally, while the border crossing and "shapeshifting" bodies always locate at the crossroads where multiple identities will encounter and finally negate the possibility of fixation.

[349] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, 9.

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