

ABSTRACT

NEGOTIATING COMMUNITY: GLORIA ANZALDÚA'S BORDERLAND THEORY AND THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

In our postmodern, post-9/11 world, writers of "American" literature must find ways to overcome or collapse the Cartesian mind/body dualistic thought undergirding our Western worldview, a view that permeates not only much of our literature but also our national psyche. This thesis traces dualistic thought as historically evidenced in representative works dating from the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, through James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pioneers* and Philip Caputo's *Indian Country*, to Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*. Ultimately, I present the composite novel genre, as exemplified by *The Things They Carried* and viewed through Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderlands theory, as a possible paradigm through which dualisms might be viewed as complementary rather than opposing, thereby leading to an acceptance of both rather than the subordination of one the other.

Georgia Pierce Williams
May 2009