

ABSTRACT

NEPANTLA, THE BRIDGING OF FEMALE ARCHETYPES THROUGH THE SPACE IN-BETWEEN

This study focuses on the portrayal of the female in Aztec song/poetry and myth, and how themes in those writings have become part of contemporary Latina literature. Gendered roles, spiritual transformations, and women's articulation of language in the negotiation of in-between spaces, especially "the state of in-between," are explored. This state of in-between is a new consciousness for *Latinos/as* in the contemporary period and is termed "nepantla," where the fragmented identity is reconstructed. While these themes have persisted as common themes from pre-Columbian times to the present, they underwent a rupture within literature, after the period of the Conquest. The resurfacing of the themes regarding women and women's roles have rarely occurred until the contemporary period, when Latinas began to reevaluate how women were perceived during the Aztec period, the Conquest, the mixing of the races, until the present. In this reexamination, contemporary Latina writers such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Pat Mora, Ana Castillo, and Cherrie Moraga re-negotiate or reconstruct their sense of identity. Anzaldúa charts the loss of female identity experienced at the time of the conquest and argues that it is the catalyst that thrust the female psyche into the in-between space of nepantla. It may be concluded that a sense of identity was based on a concept of *mestizaje* that has now evolved into a "state-of-in-between," a new universal state of consciousness.

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