

CROSSING THE BORDER WITH LA ADELITA: Lucha-Adelucha as *Nepantlera* in Delilah Montoya's *Codex Delilah*

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In 1992, to mark the five-hundredth anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the New World, San Francisco's Mexican Museum produced an exhibit titled *The Chicano Codices: Encountering Art of the Americas*. Chicana photographer Delilah Montoya created an artist's book, *Codex Delilah, Six-Deer: Journey from Mexicatl to Chicana*, whose central character, an indigenous girl named Six-Deer, meets iconic figures from the Mexicana/Chicana pantheon over a 520-year period. This essay examines a character from the work's fifth panel, Lucha-Adelucha, a representation of La Adelita, the soldadera figure associated with the Mexican Revolution. The work traces representations of La Adelita within historical documents, the pictorial archive, the corrido, Chicana feminist recuperations, and *Codex Delilah*. Braiding together approaches from Chicana feminism, anthropology, art history, and queer theory, the study adopts the *trenza* paradigm as its analytical frame. Positioning Lucha-Adelucha as emblematic of multiple border crossings that include gender, sexual expression, and femininity/masculinity, and as an example of a *nepantlera*, the work argues for an interpretation of this figure as a visual representation that transgresses the confines of heteronormativity. [Key words: Delilah Montoya, Chicana/o art, La Adelita, Chicana feminism, gender theory, queer theory]

In 1992, the world marked the five-hundredth anniversary of contact between the Americas and Europe with global commemorations that celebrated this initial juncture of the so-called Old and New Worlds. In the United States, artists and activists of mixed-race and indigenous heritage and their allies criticized the anniversary's planned observances and raised both the issue of histories silenced by the conquest and that of the further elision of these cultures during the year-long commemoration. The Mexican Museum in San Francisco responded to this unique historical moment by producing an exhibition titled *The Chicano Codices: Encountering Art of the Americas*

(Draher 1992). The curator, Marcos Sanchez-Tranquilino, used the codex, or precontact Mesoamerican book, as the overarching trope to conceive and organize the show.

Precontact books contained the sacred, cultural, and political histories and practices of various indigenous peoples of the Americas and, as such, provided critical repositories for these knowledge(s). After the conquest of Mexico by Spain in 1521, the vast majority of these books were either burned by Catholic clerics, claimed as personal spoils of war, or sent to the Spanish king, Charles V, by conquistadors in attempts at career advancement. Those that survived were ultimately preserved largely in the collections of private individuals and European libraries. Sanchez-Tranquilino wanted to counter the tragic loss of this cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986) by amassing a body of contemporary codices in one New World location to contest the destruction and the subsequent dispersal of the remaining original books. He commissioned contemporary Chicana/o artists to create works that addressed the consequences of European occupation of the Americas and encouraged them to develop pieces from the perspective of artist as contemporary “scribe.”¹

Answering Sanchez-Tranquilino’s call, artist Delilah Montoya created *Codex Delilah, Six-Deer: Journey from Mexicatl to Chicana*, a work that depicts the adventures of an indigenous girl (Six-Deer) as she pursues spiritual knowledge and power through various geographic locations and periods (see fig. 1).² Montoya, a photographic printmaker, sought to construct a historical account of the first contact between American Natives and Europeans and to reveal the processes this event set in motion. The artist fashioned the narrative from a *mestiza* viewpoint and acknowledged Mexicana and Chicana contributions to history. As the title implies, the codex traces a historical construction of race and ethnicity that occurs as a result of Six-Deer’s journey. Six-Deer traverses



Figure 1.

Delilah Montoya, *Codex Delilah, Six-Deer: Journey from Mexicatl to Chicana*, 1992.

Gouache on amate paper; mixed media, 20 x 80 x 13 3/4 in.

Photograph by M. Lee Fatherree. Reproduced by permission of the artist.

a period of 520 years (1492–2012), which transforms her understanding of herself from a *Mexicatl*³ to a Chicana. Montoya ultimately hoped that her work would encourage more recuperation and retrieval of these lost words, lost lives, and lost legacies.⁴

Codex Delilah measures approximately twenty inches high by eighty inches wide and consists of seven panels folded accordion-style.⁵ To aid its initial museum display in 1992, the museum staff attached a wire armature to the reverse of the codex following Montoya's specifications. The armature held the work in a screen-fold shape with the fourth panel parallel to the wall while panels one, two, and three and panels five, six, and seven jutted outward in crisp, forty-five-degree angles. Montoya referred to the pigment colors used by ancient scribes and artists when she later encased the work in red and black book covers for archival purposes.⁶ Each panel of the artwork contains three horizontal registers of varying size that illustrate the narrative with

painted and photographic images and texts. The artist produced, altered, and transferred the photographic images to the *amate*, or fig bark paper, using a variety of techniques, including heat and solvent processes. Montoya formed the codex's foundation from cream-colored amate and used small strips of sharply contrasting dark brown amate to delineate its separate registers. The first register of each panel reveals the invisible forces at work behind (or literally above) the scenes. In the second and largest register, Six-Deer meets *personajes* (characters) who direct, encourage, or challenge her progress. This register also contains color photographs that identify each geographic site of the story's sequential panels. In the third and lowest register, the artist inserted a computer-generated text composed in conjunction with the late poet and playwright Cecilio García-Camarillo, which provides a linear account of Six-Deer's journey (García-Camarillo and LaMadrid 2000; García-Camarillo, Rodríguez, and Gonzales 2002).⁷

My larger project involving *Codex Delilah* has been an examination of the worldview and symbol systems at play, and especially the issues of spirituality and the sacred. I began my initial analysis of the work by asking, "Who are these characters? What do they represent? How do I read them?" When I approached the current study to discuss Lucha-Adelucha, a figure found on the fifth panel of the codex, I recalled queer theorist Carla Trujillo's "*La Virgen de Guadalupe* and Her Reconstruction in Chicana Lesbian Desire" (1998). Trujillo's move to contemplate an icon of Mexican national and religious identity from the female gaze, specifically from the lesbian erotic gaze, at first startled and then intrigued me. As the child of devout German Catholic parents, I attended daily Mass at the local church conveniently located half a block from my house. Although now I consider myself more of a cultural Catholic than a practicing Catholic, the reverence and respect for Catholic traditions and theology instilled by my parents gave me pause when Trujillo

invited me to look at the Virgin with desire. Trujillo's approach to La Virgen inspired my application of queer theory to and provoked my reading of Montoya's *Lucha*.

On panel five of *Codex Delilah*, Six-Deer encounters the character Lucha-Adelucha, a representation of the soldadera, or female soldier, associated with Mexico's Wars of Independence and the Mexican Revolution (Alatorre 1961; Salas 1990, 11). Montoya dates the panel 1910 and costumes Lucha in clothing signaling the era (see fig. 2). Soldaderas, also known as Las Adelitas, performed many of the same military and politically strategic duties as men, occasionally dressed in male attire, and broke free from some of the gender constraints enforced by Mexican culture. The text in this panel's third register refers to Lucha-Adelucha as a "manly woman," a reference to the Spanish term "mari-macha," often understood as lesbian. While my work as an art historian is to discover and reveal what Montoya intended, I wondered what *else* her iconic figure might mean to me and other viewers of the work. Since Trujillo encouraged a claiming of symbols and cultural icons to "suit our own needs," I approached a consideration of Lucha-Adelucha in this spirit (Trujillo 1998, 220).

The research considers Delilah Montoya's portrayal of Lucha-Adelucha within *Codex Delilah* and suggests an understanding of the figure as emblematic of multiple border crossings that include gender, desire, sexual expression, and the continuum of femininity and masculinity. Increasingly, Chicana feminists have created theories that evoke images of weaving and braiding as conceptual tools. Within this investigation, I use the analytical frame or *trenza* (braid) paradigm, initially proposed by Concha Delgado-Gaitan (1996, 2001) and Margaret E. Montoya (1994) and later developed by Francisca E. González (1998, 2001), Karen Mary Davalos (2001), and others. In Montoya's essay, she states that intertwining the "personal with the academic voice," interdisciplinary



Figure 2.
Delilah Montoya, *Codex Delilah, Six-Deer: Journey from Mexicatl to Chicana*, 1992.
Panel 5, register 2. Gouache on amate paper, mixed media, 20 x 80 x 13 3/4 in.
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scholarship, Spanish and English, and multiple literary modes can challenge and undermine “dominant discourse” (Montoya 1994, 185). Therefore, this paradigm functions as part of a larger decolonizing project embarked upon by Chicana artists and scholars and acknowledged by the artist in the proposal she submitted to Sanchez-Tranquilino (Pérez 1999).⁸ Further, the plaiting together of theories from critical race studies, anthropology, art history, and various feminisms forms a flexible method to describe lived experiences and enables a praxis that creates a vibrant, multivocal method of interpretation.

Initially, this article traces the emergence and formation of the soldadera or La Adelita figure by considering historical documents, archival photographs, and representations within the Mexican corrido, or ballad. Secondly, the research documents the recuperation and contemporary use of La Adelita by Chicana feminists. Lastly, the work discusses Delilah Montoya's representation of the La Adelita figure, renamed and imagined in *Codex Delilah* as Lucha-Adelucha. I privilege ideas developed by queer theorists in this essay because they allow me a rich range of tools to design a multivalent interpretation of Lucha. I argue for an understanding of this figure as a site of affirmation for Chicanas/os and others whose desire is for visual representations of nonnormative gender(s), sexual expression(s), and bodies that exhibit a range of femininity and masculinity. I construct my analysis through a discussion of the character's costume or dress as described in the text and shown in visual representations, the physical presentation and comportment of her body, and the role she plays within the context of Six-Deer's journey.⁹

La Adelita within the Mexican Revolution

A reading of Lucha-Adelucha as La Adelita requires an understanding of the historical and mythic dimensions mapped on the figure of the soldadera and the terms used to describe women associated with the Mexican Revolution. Within the framework of the revolutionary period, the expression "soldadera" has generally encompassed the wide range of responsibilities that Mexican women assumed, from leadership to support roles. More recently, historians sometimes employ the word "*soldada*" to describe women as active combatants (Addison 1999; Salas 1990). Salas states that the term "soldadera" arrived in the Americas with the conquest to describe servants, regardless of gender, who used the Spanish soldiers' pay to procure food and various necessary materials (Salas 1990, 11). While "soldada" literally means "pay" and also refers to the wages Mexican men (and women) received while serving in revolutionary

armies, Spanish dictionaries do not recognize the word “soldada” as the female equivalent of “soldado,” or male soldier (Addison 1999, 5).¹⁰

Elizabeth Salas argues for the use of “soldada” rather than “soldadera” to identify women soldiers. She records that by the 1930s, the term “soldadera” specifically indicated only female relatives of soldiers and asserts that “subsequent social discourse about equality between men and women in the military precludes any future use of the word soldadera. Women who serve in the ranks of the Mexican armed forces are now officially called soldadas” (Salas 1990, 52). Following Salas, Laura Addison thinks that the term “soldada” best serves to differentiate women who actively participated in the revolution as combatants from soldaderas or those who provided other assorted services. She also proposes the term “soldad(er)a” when simultaneously referring to both the soldadera and the soldada (Addison 1999, 122). Since this work mentions women who participated in both categories but primarily considers those involved in active military service, I follow Addison’s usage to describe and distinguish among women’s multiple roles in this period of Mexican regime change. Based on *Codex Delilah’s* visual and textural portrayal, I consider Montoya’s character an active combatant and adapt Salas’s term “soldada” to describe Lucha.

During the fight for independence and throughout the revolutionary era, Mexican women led both same-sex and mixed-sex units into battle as high-ranking soldiers, served as spies and messengers, provided a range of services as camp followers, and financed the revolution by donating their inherited estates. Since the army provided neither supplies nor sustenance, wives, *novias* (girlfriends), and daughters of soldiers often accompanied their family members during military campaigns and foraged for materials to provide shelter, succor, and nourishment. These women fall within the designation of camp followers, together with women unrelated to the soldiers they served.

While some camp followers sold sexual services as a means of support, many other women cooked or washed and repaired men's clothes for pay.

Anna Macías reports that class distinctions existed within the revolutionary movement and often defined the positions women performed (1982, 39). Due to unpredictable eruptions of violence and a well-founded concern for their personal safety, many women inhabiting upper- and middle-class positions left the country. Those of the upper class who remained supported the revolution by participating in *Cruz Roja* (Red Cross) or *Cruz Blanca* (White Cross) or other charitable groups (Soto 1979, 21). Educated women of the middle class contributed to the struggle through the distribution and publication of oppositional newspapers and journals, through espionage and smuggling, or, like Dolores Jiménez y Muro, by crafting the words that shaped and sustained the movement (Macías 1982, 29–31; Soto 1979, 29).¹¹ Shirlene Soto states that the lowest classes formed the majority of *soldaderas*. In a later study, Andrés Reséndez Fuentes found that educated, upper-class women more frequently served as *soldadas*, since access to financial resources allowed them to outfit themselves with essential equipment and supplies, especially the critically important horse (Reséndez Fuentes 1995, 532; Soto 1979, 27). The class position of *indias* (Indian women) and *mestizas* often restricted these women to the less glorious tasks of caretaking male (and possibly female) soldiers, scavenging cast-off scraps after battle, nursing the wounded, and burying the dead.

Within this range of roles, the historical record specifically documents a number of women soldiers who achieved positions of power and military rank. Carmen Amelia Robles (see fig. 3) wore male clothing, attained the rank of *coronela* (colonel), and waged several successful military campaigns (Herrera-Sobek 1990, 91). Antonio Uroz describes Robles as an excellent



Figure 3.

Carmen Amelia Robles, *Coronela y revolucionaria fumando en una habitación*, retrato, 1914. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Casasola Archives.

horsewoman and of impeccable character and lauds her “unimpeachable loyalty, valor, and human sensibility” (Herrera-Sobek 1990, 91; Uroz 1972, 264).¹² Macías states that Robles continued to wear male clothing and sport pistols as late as 1973 (Macías 1982, 43). Another revolutionary colonel who led male battalions, María de la Luz Espinosa Barrera, served with Emiliano Zapata’s army for ten years and was known as La Coronela. Zapata personally signed her promotion documents (Macías 1982, 42–43). Like Robles and

many others, La Coronela adopted male dress and refused to resume her traditional gender role after the fighting ceased.

Petra Ruiz exemplifies both the crossing of gender roles and the expansion of expressed sexualities during this time. Petra, who passed as Pedro Ruiz, ascended to the rank of lieutenant and earned a reputation as a fierce and accomplished fighter. Salas recounts a tale that demonstrates the ramifications of this reputation. When Ruiz came upon a group of male soldiers about to rape a young girl, the disguised Pedro commandeered her. Unwilling to risk an encounter with *Echa Balas* or Bullets, as Petra/Pedro was also known, the men reluctantly surrendered their intended victim. Lieutenant Ruiz rode out of sight and then gallantly relinquished the girl (Salas 1990, 47). Angeles Mendieta Alatorre describes Ruiz as “dressed so perfectly” in male clothing that no one had any indication that she was female. Close-cropped hair additionally aided Petra/Pedro in her deception. Alatorre reveals Petra/Pedro’s unquenchable desire for both love and trouble, stating that Ruiz would fight men for the attentions and affections of women. Most male competitors would “step aside” because she was highly skilled with both knives and guns. However, after Petra/Pedro seduced female lovers, she abandoned them and soon found other romantic and erotic entanglements (Alatorre 1961, 91; Herrera-Sobek 1990, 92).

In this instance, a soldada not only adopts clothing associated with the male but also expresses same-sex desire. Although this construction valorizes both Lieutenant Ruiz’s bravado behavior and her disdain for further sexual or emotional involvement, Pedro/Petra establishes the presence and active participation of lesbians within the revolution. Her sartorial choices further emphasize the significance of clothing as gender marker and as a way to perform a range of masculinities and femininities. Alatorre’s account continues with Pedro/Petra’s dramatic self-unveiling at the war’s end. Positioned among

the troops during an inspection by the then-current president, Venustiano Carranza, Pedro/Petra stepped forward and startled the assembled company by asking Carranza for a discharge and announcing herself as a woman (Alatorre 1961, 91; Herrera-Sobek 1990, 92).

La Adelita within the Pictorial Archive

Archival documents bear out these examples of the adoption of male attire and the assumption of male identities by both heterosexual women and lesbians. Brothers Agustín and Gustavo Casasola collected numerous photographs taken in Mexico during the first three decades of the twentieth century. The soldad(er)as recorded in the Casasola Archive demonstrate a range of dress styles, from the female costume of blouses, *rebozos* (shawls), and skirts (still overlaid with *bandilleras*, however) to the assumption of male clothing, including military uniforms, knee-length boots, shirts and ties, trousers, and various military and nonuniform hats (see figs. 4 and 5).¹³ Encouraged by a life lived in the open, women often adopted male dress because it deterred sexual violence and decreased or disguised the readability of the female form. Additionally, it allowed efficient movement and increased safety from the dangers of combat and the natural elements. Some soldadas may have chosen male clothing not only for protection and personal comfort but also as an aspect of lesbian life or in an effort to pass as male.¹⁴ While the women in the photographs from the Casasola Archive can be read as heterosexuals taking extraordinary measures due to the circumstances of war, I maintain they open up a space for the possibility of soldad(er)a as symbolic of nonnormative gender(s) and sexual expression(s) and raise questions about naturalized conceptions of femininity and masculinity.

Scholarship developed by Judith Butler, Judith Halberstam, and José Muñoz addresses these issues and supports a consideration of the figure of Adelita and



Figure 4.
Mujer de Michoacán, 1921. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Casasola Archives.

Montoya's Lucha as sites for the production of fluid and transgressive identities. Representations from the pictorial archive demonstrate identities and gender performances created in opposition to accepted norms. Butler's work in *Gender Trouble* and other writings has provided a springboard for the debate on the interface among gender, sex, sexuality, and identity. Seeking to destabilize the categories used to define gender, Butler has used drag to interrogate three aspects of the bodily presentation of a presumed gender: biological sex, gender identity, and gender performance (Butler 1990, 137). The performance of "Woman" by men dressed in female clothing allowed her to postulate that these gender identities and gender performances do not follow from one's sex at birth. She



Figure 5.
Valentina Ramírez, c. 1911. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Casasola Archives.

considers gender imitative and mutable, without an original source and without arising from an interior essence. In Butler's understanding, bodily presentation of the self through external variables such as pose, stance, costume, and facial expression (to name only a few) creates an external show of gender. The endless repetition of culturally designated practices reflected in our desires, behaviors, and words constructs bodies as female or male (140). These external signs generate gender identity and affect the surface of the body rather than our internal "core" (173). However, the gender others observe is our creation rather than necessarily a reflection of our interior essence. The idea of performance allows a space between our understanding of our perceived gender and our

outward display or presentation of it. Our external clues indicate or project how we wish to be perceived while our more authentic self can remain hidden.

Judith Halberstam describes the constructs of female and male as “outmoded” and goes beyond Butler’s ideas to posit expressions of masculinity as a means to further destabilize the binary construction of gender (Halberstam 1998, 29, 41). Halberstam imagines masculinity in new ways, traces a thriving female masculinity from the nineteenth century on, and examines the production of this masculinity by female bodies. Just as Butler believes that femaleness and maleness do not follow inevitably from (original) biological sex,¹⁵ Halberstam maintains that biologically female or male bodies do not automatically produce a corresponding femininity or masculinity. She asserts that bodies perform masculinity and femininity differently and demonstrates that female bodies can and do produce a range of masculinities (Halberstam 1998, 234–42; Jagose 1999).

José Muñoz forms another important voice in these discussions. He theorizes disidentification as both a means of cultural production and as a strategy of resistance, while rooting his theories in the public performance of queer identity by artists of color, such as Marga Gómez and Marlon Riggs. The process of disidentification allows queers of color and others to maneuver through dominant cultural ideas and mandated behaviors to produce “identities-in difference,” a concept Muñoz adapted from the work of Chela Sandoval and Norma Alarcón (Alarcón 1990, 1996; Muñoz 1999, 6–7; Sandoval 1991). Muñoz explains that people create their notions of self by generally identifying either with or against a particular image or idea. In Muñoz’s view, resisting or fighting against a culturally enforced norm only serves to reinforce it. Instead, he proposes disidentification, a process of changing the paradigm from the inside while working “on, with, and against” problematic social structures (Muñoz 1999, 12).

Are the cross-dressed women in the Casasola Archive identifying with male power and privilege and claiming it for themselves? Are they counteridentifying with conceptions of the heroic male soldier and creating a female alternative? Or are they disidentifying with these concepts and transforming stratified notions of gender from inside a limiting and entrenched framework? How might these ideas apply to Montoya's configuration of Lucha-Adelucha? In a later section of this article, I discuss how Montoya embeds references to diversely dressed soldad(er)as from the Casasola Archive around the central figure of Lucha. These allusions support my contention that the figure of Lucha not only helps blur the binaries of femaleness and maleness but may also perform various masculinities.

La Adelita within the Corrido

Just as oral transcripts and archival photographs document actual historical figures, the Mexican ballad form also portrays the soldad(er)a in various guises and serves as a location for the transformation of this figure into a romantic heroine and mythic warrior. María Herrera-Sobek has investigated the portrayal of women soldiers within the corrido¹⁶ and, more recently, Alicia Arrizón has analyzed soldad(er)as in both the corrido and in Latina theater (Arrizón 1999, 1998; Herrera-Sobek 1990). These textual analyses of Adelita considered in combination with my later discussion of this figure's feminist revisioning create a larger context for appreciating Montoya's representation of Lucha. Herrera-Sobek examined female archetypes within the Mexican corrido or ballad and delineated four universal symbols of women portrayed most frequently in this musical form: (1) the Good and Terrible Mother, (2) the Mother Goddess, (3) the Lover, and (4) the Soldier, or Woman Warrior (1990, xviii, 84). Although Herrera-Sobek begins her discussion of the figure of the female soldier in the movement for independence, I limit my examination to the Mexican Revolution because the figure of La Adelita emerges within

this period.¹⁷ Herrera-Sobek documents that the corrido tradition portrays the soldad(er)a in three ways: (1) as a figure based on historical fact, (2) as an object of love and desire, and (3) as a subject that assumes legendary and archetypal status (92–93, 103–109).

While the corrido usually positions its central character as heroic, the ballads that describe soldad(er)as as love objects tend to deemphasize or entirely negate their role as warriors. Within these depictions of soldad(er)as as objects of desire, the figure of La Adelita first emerges, and these immensely popular ballads serve to equate the term “Adelita” with that of “soldad(er)a” (Addison 1999, 73). In one corrido, a male soldier declares his undying love for Adelita and reluctantly leaves her behind as he goes into battle. Referring to her as “*mi único placer*” (my only pleasure), he pledges his fidelity and declares that he will never leave her for another woman. The lyrics emphasize his bravery and patriotism as he answers his country’s call to battle, while they construct Adelita as the one who merely awaits his return (Herrera-Sobek 1990, 104–105). Another corrido titled “La Adelita” portrays this female figure as follower and again as love object rather than active warrior. Here, the lyrics describe her as companion to a male soldier, recount events from his point of view, and reiterate the male fear of her possible sexual betrayal. The song extols Adelita’s beauty and her steadfast devotion to her beloved, while eliminating any reference to performance in combat (Herrera-Sobek, 107–108).

In marked contrast to these representations based on recorded fact or romanticized fiction, other corridos important for this discussion locate Adelita as their central character and construct the figure of soldad(er)a as mythic entity and legend. Lyrics found in the ballads “Juana Gallo” and “La Chamuscada” elevate the soldad(er)a from ordinary human being to godlike creature invested with extraordinary powers and exalt Adelita’s valiant deeds

in battle. The Adelita character in “Juana Gallo” effectively wields an “*enorme pistolón*” (enormous gun), fights ferociously on the frontlines, and easily destroys an entire battalion of enemy soldiers single-handedly. Similarly, gunpowder has marked the hands of the courageous heroine in “La Chamuscada,” giving her the moniker “The Burnt One.” She dodges bullets effortlessly, refuses to take a lover from among the troops, and attains the rank of general due to her bravery. In contrast to the story told by other corridos, she remains faithful to her father rather than to a male lover. However, her behavior still reinforces another aspect of gender expectations, that of dutiful daughter. Personal tragedy catapults her from ordinary soldier to invincible warrior when a “scoundrel” shoots her father four times and leaves him to bleed to death. When La Chamuscada’s father dies in her arms, the corrido announces,

*Desde aquel día ya no fue soldadera,
con su canana repleta y su fusil
en las batallas fue siempre la primera,
las balaceras nomás la hacían reír.*

From that day on she was no longer a common soldier
With her cartridge belt full and her rifle

In battles she was always the first,
The bullets only made her laugh.

(Herrera-Sobek 1990, 113–14)

This valiant heroine refuses to weep for her father. Rather, her personal pain transforms her into a warrior of mythic proportions. I discuss shortly how Montoya echoes La Chamuscada’s defiant and fearless demeanor in her visual account of the Adelita figure.

La Adelita as Recuperated by Chicana Feminism

The figure of La Adelita has received extensive exploration in historical, photographic, and musical texts. Feminist reevaluation of these previous literary and visual portrayals creates important precedents for Montoya's character Lucha in *Codex Delilah*. As Chicana feminism developed in tandem with the Chicano movement in the 1960s and early 1970s, Chicanas sought to develop theories and analysis that reflected lived experience (García 1989). The feminist recuperation and revision of various icons from Chicana/o culture appeared as part of the early efforts of Chicana feminists to counter negative images and provide positive interpretations of these models. La Adelita has enjoyed considerable attention alongside other important figures such as *La Malinche*, *La Llorona*, and *La Virgen de Guadalupe* (Alarcón 1997; Candelaria 1997; Castillo 1996; Rodriguez Kessler 2005). Elizabeth Salas (1990) provides an extensive overview of the revision of La Adelita in historical accounts, fiction, visual representations, American films, and political essays by Chicanas/os. While I will not attempt a complete discussion of the various ways artists and scholars have reclaimed and reimagined this icon, I provide some important examples from three separate decades and chart a few visual representations by contemporary Chicana artists.

In an essay from 1974, Enriqueta Longeaux y Vasquez explored the historical roles of Chicanas and analyzed the struggles they encountered as they attempted to participate on a par with men within El Movimiento Chicano. Critiquing the then-recent statement that "the Chicana woman does not want to be liberated,"¹⁸ Longeaux y Vasquez evoked both the broad category of Adelita as soldier and source of sustenance during the revolution and Juana Gallo, a historical soldier celebrated in the previously mentioned corrido and a film of the same name.¹⁹ She used these figures to demonstrate the strength and power of Chicanas and their ability to fight alongside men for revolutionary

change. Moreover, she called for women and men to equally share leadership roles and charged the entire family unit with the responsibility for bringing about social change (Longeaux y Vasquez 1974).

A decade later in 1984, Norma Cantú positioned the figure of La Adelita as a location of meaning for contemporary Chicana feminists in a plenary statement presented at the National Association for Chicano Studies (Cantú 1986, 8–10). In this address, she described what she termed “the Adelita complex,” the falsely perceived position of Chicanas within Chicana/o Studies as followers rather than leaders. Cantú questioned the then-current dearth of consistently publishing Chicana authors and their absence from the curriculum of Chicana/o Studies. She evoked previous understandings of La Adelita as follower to describe the parallel status of Chicanas as subtopic and underacknowledged shapers of the larger discipline. Expanding upon prior representations, Cantú drew upon examples from literature, history, and personal experiences of Chicanas to emphasize less privileged conceptions of the multiple roles *soldad(er)* as played within the revolution as “military strategists” and “political thinkers” (Cantú 1986, 9). She then called for a recuperation of the negative image of Chicanas as Adelitas and charged her audience to recognize the essential contributions Chicanas have made and continue to make within Chicana/o Studies and the larger community as “leaders, thinkers...partners...and workers” (10).

Writer Ana Montes realized a notable revision of the image of La Adelita in her poem by the same name from 1993. Montes evokes Adelita in her role as revolutionary soldier, steadfast despite the hardships of battle, faithful to her cause among the bodies of the dead, and evincing little concern over her own physical suffering and loss of blood. I include the entire text of the poem for the reader’s consideration.

ANN MARIE LEIMER

Adelita,
Gentle with the dead,
Fierce in battle,
Loving in faith,
And side by side you bled.

Your heart

broken

by the sights of bodies
strewn in the fields of war.

Yet, you remained,

Adelita,

Today, you are called

Chicana.

Woman of women
Amor de la Revolución
Sangre de la tierra
Flor entre los muertos.

Chicana,

You still struggle.

Adelita,

You fought long and hard

A gun in your hand,

A gleam in your eyes

And faith in your heart.

Your mind and body were ravaged

Your people suffered,

Your families lost.
 Yet you remained.
 You withstood the battles of hate
 And left a trail of hope.
 You saw what other revolucionarios saw
 You killed when necessary
 You fell like them all.
 (Montes 1993, 231–32)

Perhaps Montes's most telling moment of recuperation occurs when she writes in the second stanza of the poem, "Adelita,/Today, you are called Chicana." In this way, the writer crosses our temporal understanding of La Adelita, brings her into the present, and conflates her with the bodies and sufferings of present-day Chicanas who "still struggle." By alluding to contemporary "struggles," Montes places this new form of La Adelita simultaneously within the Mexican Revolution and El Movimiento, linking these two movements for freedom in the reader's imagination. Engaged in the fight for social justice and equated with sacrifice endured for family and community, La Adelita as Chicana endures despite loss to leave a "trail of hope" for her people. Now thoroughly contemporized, Montes's Adelita makes visible the contributions of Chicanas and provides them and others with an identificatory site of power.

Using similar strategies, Chicana visual artists have also recuperated the figure of La Adelita. In a mixed-media work from 1986 titled *Los Abuelos*, Santa Barraza places images of soldad(er)as from the Casasola Archive together with La Virgen de Guadalupe and an image of her maternal grandparents. In a later oil on metal work, *Retablo of Soldaderas con Virgencita*, from 1992, Barraza again bases her depictions of women soldiers on those found in Casasola documents. Similarly, Christina Cárdenas painted a three-part image in 1993,

Coatlicue Descalza/Barefoot Coatlicue, in which the artist links Adelita with the precontact deity and surrounds the warrior figure with roses and a flaming *mandorla*, the attributes of La Virgen de Guadalupe. Alma López positions Adelita as cyberrevolutionary in her digital photograph simply titled *Adelita* (1999) and portrays her version of this figure gesturing toward a laptop computer suspended slightly above. Is the Woman Warrior now about to seize and claim the power of technology? As Dora Ramírez-Dhoore indicates, cyberspace is the contested ground of today's revolution (2005).

Reading Delilah Montoya's Adelita

Delilah Montoya produced a visual equivalent of La Adelita with her character Lucha-Adelucha in *Codex Delilah, Six-Deer: Journey from Mexicatl to Chicana* (1992). Born in Fort Worth, Texas, Montoya grew up in the stockyard district of Omaha, Nebraska. Her parents were high-school sweethearts, the classic configuration of cheerleader and football player. Her father is first generation, born in the United States to Polish immigrants, while her mother is Mexican American, with roots deeply embedded in northern New Mexico. Montoya resided in Nebraska for the first two decades of her life, before making her home in Albuquerque in 1979. Trained as a commercial photographer, Montoya first produced documentary photography influenced by Henri Cartier-Bresson and Bruce Davidson. However, Montoya quickly abandoned unmanipulated methods and began altering the photographic image with a combination of drawing, painting, and various printmaking processes. A vigorously productive artist, Montoya uses printmaking, photography, and installation to investigate issues of Chicana/o identity and spirituality from a mestiza and feminist viewpoint. Montoya currently works as an assistant professor at the University of Houston, where she teaches photography.²⁰

As part of an ongoing quest to define and articulate *Aztlán*, Montoya began

an intensive investigation of religious iconography in 1986 (Montoya 1990, 11–12). She began this exploration by researching the *santero* tradition and sacred sites such as the *Sanctuario de Chimayó*. For the traditional santera/o, carving the wooden figure of the saint is a holy or devotional act. The object's power and sanctity derive from the intention and virtue of its maker. This idea of art-making as sacred act influenced Montoya and prompted her use of Catholic rituals and devotional images, such as *Via Crucis* (The Way of the Cross) and *Corazón Sagrado* (The Sacred Heart of Jesus), popular religious practices, and traditions stemming from her grandfather's participation in the Penitente Brotherhood²¹ as inspiration for later work.²² Montoya hails from a family of strong, creative, and articulate women, and, not surprisingly, feminist recuperation and reinterpretation of mythic and iconic figures from Chicana/o culture such as La Virgen de Guadalupe, La Malinche, and La Llorona form a central aspect of her work. Increasingly interested in portraying images of women who step outside of accepted gender boundaries (so-called *las malcriadas*, or bad girls), Montoya has exhibited her recent revision of Doña Sebastiana,²³ and her photographic series on Chicana and Latina boxers is forthcoming.²⁴ Her work consistently visualizes and provides a space for the processes of decoloniality and the mobile power of differential consciousness.²⁵

I craft a discussion of Montoya's representation of Lucha-Adelucha by invoking works of various theorists who consider societal processes of transition and who seek to displace naturalized notions of gender and sexuality. In the final essay from *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldúa first introduced the concept of *nepantla* and fashioned this critically important construct with a *fronteriza* perspective inflected with mestiza consciousness (Anzaldúa 1999). Adapted from the *Nahuatl* word for "the place between two bodies of water," Anzaldúa used the term "nepantla" to represent various contemporary border crossers, including those who move

between “genders, sexes, [sexualities], cultures, languages, and nations” (Sandoval 1998, 352). For Anzaldúa, “the place between,” or *tierra de medio*, described the condition of a person who continually crosses, one who leaves but never arrives at a final destination. Rather, such a person remains in nepantla as a continual state of transition. She likened the anxiety a writer experiences when confronting the blank page with the anxiety one feels as a Chicana and/or a queer and connected nepantla with liminality. “You’re in this limbo state of nepantla *porque* you’re this but you’re that, *estás en medio de todos estos* identity states of minds or states of consciousness; you’re caught in a liminal state, in nepantla” (Keating 2000, 247).

Nepantla and other *teorías* developed by Anzaldúa share some similarities with the concepts of earlier theorists such as Belgian ethnographer Arnold Van Gennep (1873–1957) and British anthropologist Victor Turner (1920–1983). In 1908, Van Gennep presented his articulation of rites of passage that theorized a recurrent tripartite pattern inherent in social processes of transition.²⁶ After studying ritual performances and cultural ceremonies worldwide, he found that these processes of transition consisted of three stages: separation, *limen*, and incorporation (Van Gennep 1960, 11, 21).²⁷ The middle stage of rites of passage, *limen*, also expressed as “threshold” or “margin,” provided fertile conceptual territory for subsequent theorists, including Victor Turner. Turner conducted field studies with the Ndembu people of Zambia, Africa, and observed that the Ndembu used terms such as “not-girl-not-woman” to describe the paradoxical condition of initiates and symbolically equated them with processes of birth, disintegration, and death (Turner 1967, 95). Regardless of biological sex, Ndembu society viewed initiands as neither female nor male and represented them with attributes of both sexes. Seen as “a kind of human *prima material*—as undifferentiated raw material,” these young men and women embodied the paradoxical “unity” of

liminality, where those in transition are neither binary opposite (female-male) but both (Turner 1967, 98–99).

Over the next seventeen years and, until her premature death from diabetes-related complications in May 2004, Anzaldúa revisited and expanded her initial formulation of *nepantla*. However, in direct contrast to Arnold Van Gennep's colonial position and Victor Turner's modernist understandings of the self, Anzaldúa approached *nepantla* from a postmodern and decolonial point of view. In a later development of *nepantla*, she associated it with the dream state and asserted that, during these moments or processes, one can not only discover a variety of new information obscured by quotidian reality but also ascertain and personally define its meaning(s) (Keating 2000, 267). When asked about the similarities between her theories and those of poststructuralism, Anzaldúa stated that while constructing her ideas she felt it important to use Spanish terms, to connect pre-Columbian knowledges and structures with postcolonial ones, and to demonstrate how these "systems of knowledge" continue into the present. She privileged the indigenous aspect of her identity and rooted the development of her theory in this source, although she acknowledged, as a *mestiza*, that the resulting view contained both indigenous and Euro-American elements. She declared, "It's a hybridity, a mixture, because I live in this liminal state between worlds, between realities, between systems of knowledge, between symbology systems. This liminal borderland, terrain, or passageway, this interface, is what I call 'nepantla'" (Keating 2000, 268).

In Anzaldúa's last published work, she explained that she used *nepantla* to "theorize liminality" and introduced the idea of "nepantleras," or "those who facilitate passages between worlds" (Anzaldúa and Keating 2002, 1). Anzaldúa's theory arose from lived experience of the physical border between Mexico and the United States and emphasized that, while moments of liminality occur on

many levels, including psychological, sexual, and spiritual, these moments also occur when one moves from one geographic location to another (Anzaldúa 1999, 19). Therefore, we can understand liminality as a period of fluidity, both temporal and spatial. I braid nepantla and nepantleras into the discussion of Lucha-Adelucha to emphasize the multiplicity of borders, spaces, states, and conditions crossed both by Lucha and Six-Deer. Most appropriate to this interpretation of Lucha-Adelucha, Anzaldúa's comments introduce the symbolic value of the border as a site for the crossing of gender(s) and sexualities when she invokes the idea of "the other side" (*el otro lado*), connected in her imaginary with queer identity and a state of perpetual in-between.

The mother's words are barbs digging into her flesh.

De las otras. Cast Out. Untouchable.

"But I'm me," she cries, "I've always been me."

"Don't bring your queer friends into my house,
my land, the planet. Get away . . ."

Away, she went away

But each place she went

Pushed her to the other side, *al otro lado*.

(Anzaldúa 1994, 3)

Anzaldúa's treatment emphasizes the idea of a stage of continual transition for those possessing queer consciousness within the dominant heterosexual paradigm and implicates those who inhabit other borders, such as those moving between countries, races, or social positions. She also clearly claims the space of the queer, lesbian, and bisexual within the nation, in direct contrast to her mother's wishes, and demands recognition of this presence in "house, land, [and] planet."

In the second register of *Codex Delilah's* fifth panel, Montoya echoes Anzaldúa's

<https://thisbridgecalledoverspace.net>

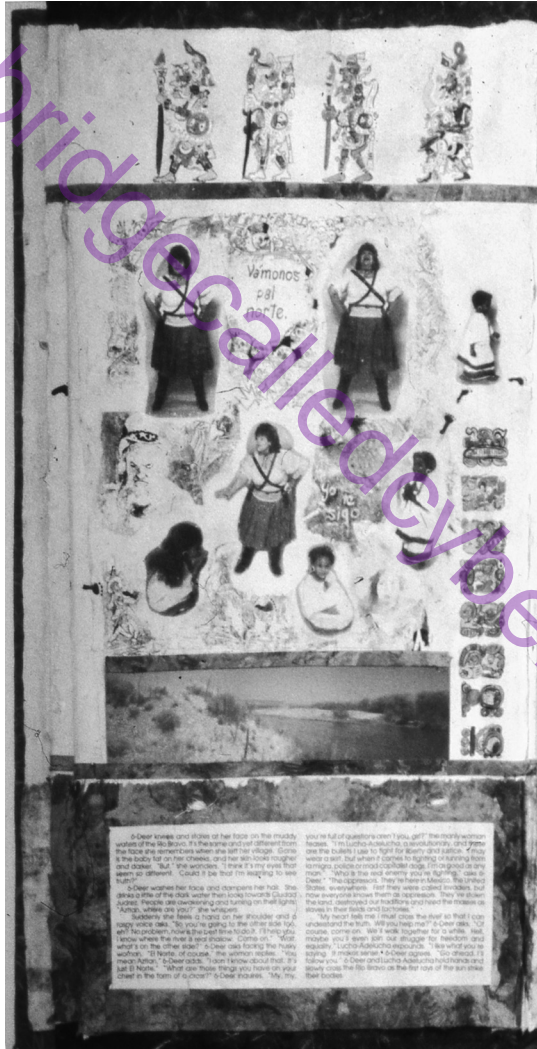


Figure 6.
Delilah Montoya, *Codex Delilah, Six-Deer: Journey from Mexicali to Chicana*, 1992.
Panel 5. Gouache on amate paper; mixed media, 20 x 80 x 13 3/4 in.
Copyright Ann Marie Leimer:

symbolically loaded otro lado in her visual and textual portrayal of Lucha-Adelucha (see figs. 6–9). At a river's edge, circa 1910, Six-Deer first encounters Lucha, a proud and physically commanding woman whose name comes from the word "*luchar*," meaning "to struggle." Montoya imagines Lucha as her version of La Adelita, or the female soldier who fought in the Mexican Revolution from 1910 to 1920. In the text from this panel's third register, Lucha tells Six-Deer that the enemies of liberty and justice are everywhere, no longer just in Mexico and the United States. In this way, Montoya implicates Lucha as a figure of women's active involvement in struggles for freedom worldwide and expands our understanding of her symbolic importance within and beyond the codex. While her visual representation encourages a specific historical location, her metaphoric value crosses multiple borders.

Montoya organized this register in an inverted pyramid shape accentuated with a steep diagonal on the panel's right side. Two black-and-white illustrations of Lucha-Adelucha form the upper points of the triangular pictorial field while a color image of Lucha creates the nadir of the pyramid. The artist formed the right diagonal with three representations of Six-Deer, two black-and-white and one in color. Alluding to the costs of border crossing, Montoya uses images from the great Mexican printmaker José Guadalupe Posada, known for his political satire of the ruling class during the reign of Mexican president Porfirio Díaz (1876–1911), known as the *Porfiriato*. Placed significantly between the two repeated photographs of Lucha-Adelucha in the uppermost section of the register, piles of skulls and *calaveras*, or skeletons, wearing military uniforms indicate the Mexican revolutionary period, provide a sense of Lucha's milieu, and anchor her visually. Montoya superimposed a piece of torn paper with a painted text announcing Lucha's call to Six-Deer, "*Vámonos pal norte* (Let us go to the north)," between these repeating images. The artist communicates the warrior's personal power and courage when she illustrates Lucha-Adelucha



Figure 7.

Delilah Montoya, *Codex Delilah, Six-Deer: Journey from Mexicatli to Chicana*, 1992.

Detail of panel 5, register 2. Gouache on amate paper, mixed media, 20 x 80 x 13 3/4 in. Copyright Ann Marie Leimer.

literally laughing in the face of danger, her doubled image flanked with Posada's terrifying images of death.

Montoya continues her acknowledgment of the inherent uncertainty of border crossing in the lower left portion of the register. Here a grimacing and beady-eyed man scowls at the viewer. His long hair and beard, topped by a high hat festooned with a star-studded hatband, indicate an early depiction of Uncle Sam (see fig. 7). The artist adds white paint to his left eye, a choice that heightens his menacing appearance. Additionally, at the far left, we see a very faded image of two men, one reclining on the ground and the other standing immediately behind him. A circular form surrounding the standing man's head suggests a halo and recalls stories of St. Christopher, the patron saint of travelers, or,

more appropriately, Juan Soldado, the patron folk saint of immigrants. These images may imply, as in the ex-voto tradition, calls for heavenly intervention or protection for those moving between Mexico and the United States.

In the uppermost depictions of the woman revolutionary, Lucha stands with her arms akimbo and her hands thrust emphatically at waist rather than hip height (see fig. 8). The photographs are identical except for the woman's facial expression. In the left photograph, Lucha gazes steadily toward the viewer with a serious but pleasant look. In the photograph on the right, she laughs heartily, her mouth open wide, head thrown back, her chest arcing slightly backward. Montoya used images of the soldad(er)as from the Casasola Archive as inspiration for her portrayal of Lucha. Montoya's Lucha-Adelucha appears as a thickly built woman dressed in a full skirt that falls just below her knees, its multiple folds accentuating her broad hips. Her feet are clad in dark suede or leather boots that she plants wide apart like anchoring roots under her ample body. She wears a loosely fitting blouse with slightly puffed sleeves that end at her elbows, while a gathered section of the sleeve falls just below her biceps. Over the blouse, a brace of bandilleras cross her chest. Two holstered pistols strapped at her waist by a wide belt demonstrate a defensive readiness and repeat those found in the Casasola Archive images pictured in this essay (figs. 3, 4, and 5). A cord rests at the base of her neck and connects to a barely discernible large-scale straw hat that frames her dark and curly shoulder-length hair. At first or second glance, the hat merges into the background, recognizable as a separate costume piece only when the viewer considers the color photograph of Lucha below.

We understand this character as soldad(er)a primarily from the bandilleras that cross her chest, rather than other elements of female costume current in Mexico during early decades of the twentieth century. However, a



Figure 8.

Delilah Montoya, *Codex Delilah, Six-Deer: Journey from Mexicalt to Chicana*, 1992.

Detail of panel 5, register 2. Gouache on amate paper, mixed media, 20 x 80 x 13 3/4 in.

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puzzling conflict exists between her comportment, her textural description, and her costume. She does not solely adopt male attire as we have seen in the Casasola photographs (figs. 3 and 5). Instead, Lucha-Adelucha's dress resembles that of the woman from Michoacán (fig. 4) and mirrors her delicate blouse paired with a nonrestrictive skirt. While Lucha's attire performs a more traditionally feminine role, her comportment in this representation emerges in sharp contrast. Lucha's commanding stance, fearless countenance, and confident sense of her own power recall the corrido's descriptions of Juana Gallo and La Chamuscada. We easily imagine Lucha dodging bullets, dispatching an enemy, and protecting the sovereignty of women as Petra Ruiz did. In fact, in Montoya and García-Camarillo's text,

Lucha introduces herself to a curious Six-Deer with the bold declaration,

I'm Lucha-Adelucha, a revolutionary, and these are the bullets I use to fight for liberty and justice. I may wear a skirt, but when it comes to fighting or running from la migra, police or mad capitalist dogs, I'm as good as any man.

Butler's notion that we produce gender through the repeated expression of desires, acts, and utterances comes into uneven play when examining Montoya's Lucha. What gender(s) does Lucha perform? Her attire seems to indicate a less active role in combat, while her presence and commanding words work against a view of her as selfless soldad(et)a who merely follows and supports a male soldier. Bodily strength and size are not necessarily synonymous, but Lucha's girth helps us perceive her as physically powerful. The tension between her costume and facial expression, her empowered words, and self-assured and self-directed actions lend themselves to an expanded understanding of how she produces a more flexible identity. Montoya places a choir of gender performances that surround and visually support Lucha in the lower half of the register. These additions enable complex associations with the women from the Casasola Archives. In the transferred image to Lucha's right, we see a woman's face in three-quarter profile. She glances downward to the viewer's left, her eyes almost closed and her mouth parted. Montoya took this image from *Soldaderas en el estribo del vagón de ferrocarril en Buenavista, Mexico City* (1911–1914), a well-known photograph of women on a train from the Casasola Archives, also known as *La Adelita*.²⁸ The process of transferring photocopied images Montoya used throughout *Codex Delilah* reverses the visual material. The woman glances to the right in the original photograph while, in Montoya's appropriation, the woman looks to the left. Directly below Adelita's face, Montoya painted the Spanish text "*Yo te sigo*"

(I will follow you) in white paint, reflecting words spoken by Six-Deer to Lucha. Montoya transferred another popular photograph from the Casasola Archives immediately below and to the right of *La Adelita*. This image, also reversed, titled *Soldadera con carrillera y bandera nacional en estación de ferrocarril* (1914), shows a woman soldier standing in a bed of train tracks. She holds a Mexican flag in her left hand and a drawn sword aloft in her right hand. Montoya includes only the woman's face (see fig. 7). The artist's further references to the soldad(er)as and their varying performances of masculinities and femininities allow an informed viewer to connect the female masculinity of Carmen Robles and other soldad(er)as with Lucha-Adelucha.

I believe that, in addition to making use of the symbolic value of costume and demeanor, Montoya uses place as an important tool to complicate the significance of Lucha-Adelucha. Location emerges as a critical element because we associate La Adelita with Guerrero and other central Mexican states more frequently than with the Río Bravo. The artist situates the visual and textual narrative far from the revolution's primary battles directly on the Río Bravo, the site of crossing, where the multilayered issues of border negotiation powerfully converge.²⁹ Montoya includes a slightly smaller color depiction of Lucha directly below her double portrait. This image encapsulates the central action of the panel as Lucha extends her right hand to Six-Deer. Lucha's left hand remains at her waist while her upper body bends toward the child below to the left. Montoya depicts the girl/woman crouched, her body a compact bundle. Facing to the right, we see only a portion of Six-Deer's face. Her dark, curly hair, now free from her usual clothbound trenzas, cascades loosely down her back. She holds her hands together in front of her face and reaches them slightly forward in a washing or drinking motion. When she sees her visage reflected in the river, Six-Deer notices that she looks different. Although Montoya portrays Six-Deer as a young child throughout the codex, the text in the bottom register describes



Figure 9.

Delilah Montoya, *Codex Delilah, Six-Deer: Journey from Mexicatl to Chicana*, 1992.

Detail of panel 5, register 2. Gouache on amate paper, mixed media, 20 x 80 x 13 3/4 in.

Copyright Ann Marie Leimer.

her as having lost her “baby fat” and the viewer understands that Montoya’s central character leaves her childhood behind in this panel. Later, Six-Deer’s words reflect how the journey has changed her: “I think it’s my eyes that seem so different. Could it be that I’m learning to see truth?” By glancing at the river, featured prominently in the second register, and consulting the text from the third register, we understand the full impact of Lucha’s gesture toward the child. At the end of this panel, Lucha and Six-Deer cross the river hand-in-hand as dawn’s first rays of light strike their bodies.

Montoya and García-Camarillo’s text details that Six-Deer washes her face, dampens her hair, and drinks the river water. She looks toward Ciudad Juárez and notices lights coming on in the nearby houses. Then, as she crouches on the riverbank, a hand touches her shoulder and

a raspy voice asks, “So you’re going to the other side too, I know where the river is real shallow. Come on.” “Wait, what’s on the other side?” Six-Deer asks facing the husky woman. “El Norte, of course,” the woman replies.

Anzaldúa’s poem included earlier demonstrates another interpretation of Montoya and García-Camarillo’s use of the phrase “the other side” beyond that of mere geographic space. Can we consider this crossing as representing same-sex desire or, following Turner, a flexible movement between hetero- and homosexuality, when he compares liminality to bisexuality (Turner 1967, 98–99)? I encourage an interpretation of Lucha-Adelucha that allows for this mobility between binaries of sexual expression (Martin 1996; Sedgwick 1990, 1993).³⁰

What borders do Six-Deer and Lucha-Adelucha cross? When Six-Deer observes her reflection in the Río Bravo, she becomes aware that she is no longer a child, her face having lost the fullness of childhood. Therefore, we

can view Six-Deer's journey as both rite of passage and initiation ritual. If we understand the river as symbolically representing the threshold, then we can understand this crossing as the transition from child to adult; the movement through heterosexual and homosexual space(s), consciousness, and desire; the interplay between femininity and masculinity; and the negotiation of Mexican and American identities and cultures. The figure of Lucha-Adelucha then exemplifies these states of liminality and represents those who, while and after crossing, remain in a constant state of flux. In Montoya's depiction, Lucha-Adelucha extends her hand to Six-Deer and together they cross this dangerous and fruitful site (Turner 1967, 110).³¹ Therefore, Lucha-Adelucha becomes Anzaldúa's *nepantlera*, the person who guides Six-Deer through numerous transitions, including literal and figurative borders and states of consciousness, and who exemplifies potential paths for the young girl. I understand Lucha-Adelucha as an embodiment of these multiple crossings, one that evokes the *soldad(er)a* in its various aspects and emphasizes her mobility among expressions of femininity and masculinity, normative gender roles, and expression(s) of same-sex desire or a spectrum of desires. Further, I suggest that Lucha, as liminal figure, border crosser, and *nepantlera*, can be seen as neither female nor male, neither feminine nor masculine, but both and simultaneously something else, something beyond binaries, something queer.³²

Perhaps a helpful paradigm to consider while exploring these important ideas developed by queer and gender theorists is that of a kaleidoscope where biological (birth) sex, gender, masculinity, femininity, sexual preference, sexual desire, and sexual object choice configure and reconfigure themselves in endless variations of complex, multihued, and ever-shifting patterns. In this way, the range of options or positions that configure the self embrace mobility and fluidity and can accommodate ever more diverse subject positions. The kaleidoscope allows us to see and feel the intricate and continually moving

designs created by these ever-transforming aspects of identity. Using an imaginary kaleidoscope to consider identity issues provides the subject with agency, as each individual makes the choice to mentally grasp the scope's outer cylinder and move it against its inner one. What I find most helpful about the kaleidoscope image is that every nuance, every new development, every possible configuration of these categories produces and contains beauty. Therefore, each self and each configuration of the self is beautiful, important, and valuable.

Readers familiar with the work of queer theorist Alicia Gaspar de Alba may note the similarity of my image of a kaleidoscope to that of her identity wheel (2003). Gaspar de Alba created this device for her students at the University of California, Los Angeles as a means of examining the processes of identity formation. At the center or hub of the wheel lies the question "Who/what am I?" Away from this central point move the "spokes of difference" or the aspects that constitute subjectivity and that partially include "language, gender, class, race, ethnicity, generations, national origin, regional affiliation, political ideology, religion, sexuality" (Gaspar de Alba 2003, 108). Gaspar de Alba acknowledges that answering the core query is a paradoxical endeavor, neither orderly, secure, nor consistent. Regardless of the tool used to interrogate and construct the self, in our postmodern world, identity is clearly neither fixed nor tidy.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the figure of soldad(er)a emerged during the Mexican Wars of Independence and the subsequent Revolution of 1910. Representations of this figure initially appeared in historical accounts, the visual record, and artistic portrayals, specifically, the Mexican corrido. Within the ballad form, the image of soldad(er)a and the romanticized and mythic representations of La Adelita merge. The revolution provided a unique opportunity for Mexicanas chafing at the confinement of female role(s)

within Mexican society to move beyond accepted dress, modes of thinking, and gendered behavior. Some soldad(er)as crossed the borders of compulsory heterosexuality to recognize and express lesbian desire and perform what Halberstam calls female masculinity (Rich 1993).

More recent adaptations of the figure of La Adelita emerge within Chicana feminism, reviewed and reconstituted as symbols of powerful, active women. Reimagined by contemporary Chicana artists and writers, these new representations graft the power and agency of the Woman Warrior onto the bodies of Chicanas. Delilah Montoya's revision of La Adelita as Lucha-Adelucha within *Codex Delilah* provides a symbol of multiple border crossings, including the geographic border between the United States and Mexico, the transition from childhood innocence to adult awareness, and the traversing of normative gender roles. It takes great courage *y corazon* to cross the borders of normative gender(s) and sexual expression(s). Who better to represent this viewpoint than a woman committed to revolutionary change? As an exemplar of Anzaldúa's nepantlera, Lucha-Adelucha is in a permanent state of transition between Anglo and Chicana/o nations, hetero- and homosexual identity or expression, and the performance of femininity and masculinity. She functions to assist Six-Deer in multiple border crossings and serves as an identificatory source of power both for Six-Deer within the codex and for viewers of the work. This consideration of Lucha-Adelucha as a representation of someone who crosses gendered role expectations creates spaces for a range of mobile identities that contest the construction of gender as binary, as femininities and masculinities linked to biological sex, and supports further transgressions of heteronormativity.

Notes

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¹ I have taken this information from the 1992 traveling exhibition brochure reproduced in the unpaginated *Exhibition Sourcebook*, one of the educational materials prepared by Marcos Sanchez-Tranquilino for the Mexican Museum. Information courtesy of the archives of Holly Barnet-Sanchez and used with the permission of Marcos Sanchez-Tranquilino.

² Montoya produced two versions of *Codex Delilah* in 1992, *Codex Delilah, Six-Deer: Journey from Mexicatl to Chicana* and *Codex Delilah, Six-Deer: A Journey from Mechica to Chicana*, altering the title slightly to indicate the variation. Santa Fe curators Dominic Arquero, Ellen Chadwick, Imogene Goodshot, and Larry Ogan organized a show titled *Quincentennial Perspective: Artists Discover Columbus* and exhibited the second version of *Codex Delilah* along with seventy other artworks offering a different point of view on the anniversary of Columbus's arrival. The show first opened at the Castillo Cultural Center in New York City in 1992. Later, it traveled back to Santa Fe, where it opened at the Gallery at the Rep (Santa Fe's repertory theater) during the week of the Columbus Day observance. According to Larry Ogan, the exhibition strove to present a balanced view of the quincentenary and equally represented "Native American, Hispanic, and Anglo" artists. After years of relentless advocacy by María Teresa Márquez, associate professor and curator of Chicana/o and Southwest Literature at the Center for Southwest Research (CSWR), University of New Mexico at Albuquerque, the CSWR purchased the first version of the codex in late 2000. Stanford University purchased the second version from Montoya in May or June of 1995 and currently houses the work in the Special Collections of the Green Library. The primary difference between the two is the amount of visual detail, primarily in the painted areas. Montoya further differentiated the second version when she painted Gregorian dates on each panel underneath the Maya glyphs. In this essay, I base my comments on the first version of Montoya's codex.

³ Montoya invented the indigenous group from which Six-Deer hailed and termed them *Mexicatl*, a word reminiscent of the predominant Central Mexican group at the time of the conquest, the Nahuatl-speaking *Mexica*.

⁴ Delilah Montoya, interview by Ann Marie Leimer, digital video and digital audio recording, Lockhart, Texas, 26 November 2003. In 2004, Laura Addison, curator at the Museum of Fine Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, produced *Beyond Words: Artists and the Book* and selected *Codex Delilah, Six-Deer: Journey from Mexicalt to Chicana* as one of the twenty-three works included in the exhibition. The show opened on 22 October 2004 in the museum's Beaugard Gallery and closed on 23 January 2005. Addison displayed only panels five and six of the codex, sections of the work that illustrate the historical periods of the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920), as discussed in this essay, and the Chicano Movement of the 1960s. The exhibition emphasized artists “whose work engages with books, either as objects in and of themselves or as intellectual explorations” and included *Codex Delilah* as an example of work that took its “inspiration from book ‘technologies,’” both old and new (Sanchez-Tranquilino 1992, n.p.). For a review of the exhibition, please see Cook-Romero 2004.

⁵ I use the measurements published in the *Chicano Codices* exhibition catalog of 20 x 80 x 13 ¾ inches. However, when viewing the work at the CSWR, I recorded individual panels that varied from 12 ½ to 12 ¾ inches, which would render the total length approximately 87 ½ inches or more. The CSWR notes *Codex Delilah* as measuring 76 x 42 centimeters (folded and including the book covers), which translates to 29.92 x 16.53 inches. Montoya followed the dimensions of the Mayan codices, such as the Dresden and Paris, where the Mesoamerican scribes produced rectangular pages twice as high as they were wide.

⁶ For more information on the Mesoamerican scribal and artistic practices used to produce the codices, please see Boone 2000.

⁷ Cecilio García-Camarillo, poet, playwright, publisher, editor of *Caracol*, founder of *Especios de Aztlan*, and tireless advocate of *flor y canto* (flower and song), died from cancer at the age of fifty-eight on 16 January 2002 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Born in Laredo, Texas, he received a bachelor of arts in English literature from the University of Texas in 1967 and in 1977 moved to Albuquerque, where he made his home. Montoya and García-Camarillo enjoyed decades of friendship and collaborative artistic partnership, as evidenced by *Codex Delilah* and other projects, such as another artist's book titled *Crickets in My Mind* (1992). The following year Montoya produced a collotype print portrait of García-Camarillo titled “Without Innocence, How Can There Be Wisdom?” For information on García-Camarillo's work, see in-text citations.

⁸ In her artist's proposal for *Codex Delilah*, Montoya reflected on her concern regarding the construction of Chicana and Chicano histories. She described Chicanas/os as “a colonized people” whose history had been recorded “from a foreign European perspective” that often negated important issues and viewed “concerns relevant to us...as obstructions to colonization.” Artist's proposal provided courtesy of Delilah Montoya.

⁹ For an analysis of how dress and clothing produce gender and racial identities in work by Chicana artists, please see Pérez 2002.

¹⁰ For Anna Macías's scholarship on the origins and definitions of the term(s), see Macías 1982, 40.

¹¹ Jiménez y Muro contributed to the Plan de Ayala of 28 November 1911 and the Social and Political Plan of 18 March 1911.

¹² The entire text reads: *Como una real saeta salía a caballo en lo álgido del combate y siempre dejó una huella imborrable de lealtad, valentía y sentido humano.* I use Herrera-Sobek's translation.

¹³ Bandilleras are leather belts worn across the shoulder or chest, often crossed over the breastbone, that contain ammunition, generally rifle cartridges or bullets.

¹⁴ This is not to suggest lesbians participated only as soldadas. Bisexuals and lesbians may have been soldaderas as well.

¹⁵ I juxtapose the word "original" with "biological sex" to acknowledge those persons born into one form of physical body who may choose to hormonally or surgically alter their initial or birth body, that is, transsexuals, and to emphasize the fluidity of seemingly fixed categories, especially the material substance of the human body.

¹⁶ In her important and extensive investigation of the corrido, Herrera-Sobek addresses its stereotypic portrayal of Mexican women. In contrast to earlier explorations by Vicente T. Mendoza (1944, 1954) and Américo Paredes (1957, 1976) that emphasize the corrido as cultural and historical texts, Herrera-Sobek interrogates the Mexican ballad using feminist archetypal theory. She states that some feminist scholars find Jung's categories limiting, and yet strongly advocates for continued feminist engagement, a revisioning of his ideas, and a flexible understanding of archetypes. In her chapter on the female soldier archetype, Herrera-Sobek mentions several women soldiers who either dressed or passed as male, including Carmen Amelia Robles, Carmen Parra Alaniz, and Petra Ruiz. However, she does not complicate her analysis with a discussion of the range of possible sexualities performed by these and other soldad(er)as, nor suggest how this might implicate or challenge existing notions of masculinity and femininity.

¹⁷ The Mexican Wars of Independence began in 1810 with the cry of Dolores (*El Grito de Dolores*) uttered by Miguel Hidalgo in the town of Dolores within the Mexican state of Guanajuato. Despite freeing itself from Spanish rule in 1821, the newly formed Mexican nation endured political and economic struggle into the following century which ultimately resulted in the Mexican Revolution of 1910–1920. Agrarian reform constituted one of the major issues that fueled this conflict.

¹⁸ The late Rodolfo "Corky" González founded La Crusada para la Justicia, the Crusade for Justice, in 1965. Four years later, his organization hosted the National Youth and Liberation Conference in Denver, Colorado. At this conference, Chicano nationalism was introduced via *El plan espiritual de Aztlán* and one group of women in attendance announced its support of the conference's goals with the statement, "It was the consensus of the group that the Chicana woman does not want to be liberated" (quoted in García 1997, 29).

¹⁹ The film *Juana Gallo*, written and directed by Miguel Zacarías, was released in Mexico in 1961. María Félix played the title role opposite Luis Aguilar. Similarly, in 1967 Alberto Mariscal produced *La Chamuscada*, inspired by the corrido of the same name.

²⁰ For an analysis of Montoya's art production, see González 1995; Noriega 1995; and Sorell 1999. For Montoya's comments on her recent work with digital photography, see Montoya 2002,

181–88.

²¹ Scholarly debate continues regarding the exact origins of *Los Hermanos Penitentes* (The Penitente Brotherhood), with many theories linking its development in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado to the Third Order of St. Francis, a lay religious order established by St. Francis of Assisi in 1221. However, the *Hermanidad*, as it is also known, functioned as a *cofradía* (confraternity) or mutual aid society and developed in tandem with Catholic religious practice during the early 1800s. Due to the scarcity of priests, brothers provided spiritual and economic support for members of these communities, and their presence served to preserve *Hispano* traditions and culture. For more information, see Pulido 2000; Weigle 1976; Wroth 1991; and Chávez 1954, 97–123.

²² For an analysis of the deployment and revision of popular spiritual practices by Chicanas and Latinas in literature, please see McCracken 1999.

²³ Doña Sebastiana is Montoya's revision of the New Mexican figure of death, or *La Muerte*, represented by a skeleton who sits inside the Penitente death cart with a drawn bow and arrow. Historically, members of the Penitente Brotherhood have pulled the death cart during Holy Week processions as a reminder of mortality. Montoya exhibited a digital print of this figure and a digital video as part of *¡Picarte! Photography Beyond Representation*, an exhibit curated by Roberto C. Buitrón for the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona, and held from 8 November to 14 March 2004.

²⁴ Delilah Montoya's series on Chicana and Latina boxers, titled *Women Boxers: The New Warriors*, will be published in Houston, Texas, by Arte Público Press in 2006.

²⁵ Chela Sandoval articulates differential consciousness as both a new subject position and a theoretical mode of operation that allows an existence within and simultaneously outside of dominant ideology. Differential consciousness is the fruit of U.S. Third World feminism and constitutes part of Sandoval's larger formulation of oppositional consciousness. In Sandoval's view, differential consciousness contains power that is mobile, a power that brings established modes of being, thinking, and behaving into new configurations. Further, it requires and produces "alienation, perversion, and reformation" in its viewers and adherents (Sandoval 1991, 3). Please also see Sandoval 1998 and 2000.

²⁶ Rites of passage recognize and often celebrate the moving between social roles, modes of understanding, or life stages such as birth and adolescence. Some rites go beyond the mere acknowledgment or affirmation of the change in condition and actually construct the passage themselves, especially rites of initiation in which an individual is "made" through ceremony or transformed from child to adult during the ritual process. Please see Turner 1967, 101–102 and Myerhoff 1982, 109.

²⁷ In the separation stage, the individual departs or separates from a previous condition, status, life stage; goes through a period of transition; and then returns or is reintegrated into the original location or community, now a changed individual.

²⁸ For an analysis of the use of photographs from the Casasola Archives by Chicanas/os and other

artists, please see Sorell 1984.

²⁹ For an in-depth analysis of the intersection and imbrication among issues of space, geography, the body, and national borders as part of the construction of identity in Chicana literature, please see Brady 2002.

³⁰ Sedgwick and Martin's work constitutes important discussions among interplay between gender and sexuality.

³¹ Turner describes liminality as "fruitful darkness."

³² I use the word "queer" in its broadest possible sense to indicate those who work against entrenched notions of a polarizing heterosexuality.

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