

## EDITOR'S COMMENTARY

### Itzpapalotl: The Life-giving and Knowledge-producing Spirit of *Chicana/Latina Studies*

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Over the past five years, my editorial work at *Chicana/Latina Studies* has been guided by Itzpapalotl. An Aztec warrior goddess, Itzpapalotl is a fertilizing force who is a caretaker of the realms that generate life, learning, and ingenuity. I encountered Itzpapalotl when studying the editorial praxis of Chicana editors of a Chicano student newspaper (Alemán and Olivo 2019). In looking to articulate the form of generationally-fueled spiritual activism and print counterpublic (Blackwell 2011) they engaged, Anzaldúa led me to her, writing about her domain, the Tamoanchan as a birthplace of both knowledge and human life. Wanting to know more about the Obsidian Butterfly or Clawed Butterfly, as she is also referred to, I learned that she serves as a guardian of a dimension that is concurrently life-giving and knowledge-producing, overseeing a legion of smaller deities who are connected through time and space. Drawn to this feminine figure that is a sentinel for the energy that produce learnedness and existence, she signifies a pre-Columbian understanding of creation that is broader and more holistic than Western conceptions which disconnect the birthing of ideas and the birthing of life as two distinct and separate processes. Chicana scholars have similarly echoed this Indigenous worldview. Anzaldúa, for instance described writing as constitutive, acts which generated her spirit, “remaking and giving birth to” it as she put pen to paper. Irene Lara also hails this generative quality, writing that women procreate not only biologically, but also intellectually in that they can be “pregnant with a child, an idea for a book, the spark of an artwork, the

will to politically organize, or any other way we as humans across sexes and genders can embody maternity as a positionality from which we create.” (Lara 2014, 116). The Aztec mythology that anoints a female warrior to safeguard these deific sources of life and knowing aligned with the efforts of the Chicana editors I was in conversation with. They saw themselves as a collective front, willing to face the innumerable challenges their journalistic endeavors at a predominantly white and patriarchal college campus encountered because the racialized knowledge about Chicanidad and Latinidad they helped flourish was too precious and life-affirming to leave unguarded.

The editor for *Chicana/Latina Studies* is a similar steward. Conceived to disrupt and broaden the Ivory Tower’s system of knowledge production, *Chicana/Latina Studies* intentionally pursues a feminist editorial praxis that prioritizes mentoring first-generation junior scholars into citable scholars. I—as all the previous editors before me—represent a collective spiritual undertaking to maintain a raced- and gendered- knowledge-producing site that has been carefully cultivated by MALCSistas. Guided by Itzpapalotl, editors of *Chicana/Latina Studies* nurture the intellectual and imaginative labor of past, present, and future MALCS members, recognizing these *conocimientos* as vital for survival, for our well-being, and for the transformation of our world. The import of these obligations beckons the shepherding spirit of Itzpapalotl, a delicate yet formidable force for these keepers who are connected over time.

It is this spirit that has helped me steer thirty-six essays into publication—twenty-eight of which were authored by pre-tenure scholars or graduate students. Itzpapalotl oversaw my selections for reviewers, and helped me fashion editorial feedback, and clarified the need to acknowledge the role of the reviewers in this process. Itzpapalotl also inspired in the hashtag #CiteaMALCSista and its corresponding efforts: 1) MALCSRadio, bi-monthly conversations with our

contributors that allow them to reflect on their theorizations, writing process, and academic publishing; 2) social media accounts to promote the brilliance of our content and contributors; and 3) increased access to our most recent content via a pay-for-content feature on our journal website.

Itzpapalotl also ensures the journal remains a space for innovative and dynamic theories, methodologies and storytelling. For instance, a multitude of brilliant theoretical constructs have been explicated or expanded over the last ten issues, including concepts such as transinterpretation (Sandoval 2018; Gaspar de Alba 2021), horizontal contact zones (Chaves-Daza 2020), dsmic poetics of the flesh (Hurtado 2020), ratchet of the earth (Mendoza Aviña and Morales 2018), border arte as medicine (Ellis 2017), decolonial topographies (Diaz-Sanchez 2017), Latina Anónima (Roncero-Bellido 2020), and rasquache domesticana (Hinojos and Hurtado 2021). Several innovative methodological approaches have been conceptualized on our pages, including muxerista portraiture (Flores 2017), platicas-testimonios (Flores Carmona, Hamzeh, Bejarano, Hernández Sánchez, and El Ashmawi 2018) and decolonial phenomenology (Lara-Bonilla 2019). The dynamic cultural work produced by Chicana/Latina/Indígena women remains an fundamental entry point, as analysis of literature (Ellis 2017, 2019; Bondi 2018; Hurtado 2018; Santos 2018; Montenegro 2021; Rottschafer 2022; Solomon 2022), film (Diaz-Sanchez 2017; Ruiz 2019), art (Martin-Baron 2019; Sotomayor 2020; Scerbo 2022), poetry (Hey-Colón 2021; Reichle-Aguilera 2021), plays (Huerta 2018), Indigenous hip hop (Martinez 2018), danza folklorico (Chavez 2000), spoken word (Rivera 2020) and food (Creel Falcón 2018, de la Luz Ibarra 2018) reveal how imperative these sites for Chicana/Latina/Indígena knowledge production. Exceptional applications of Anzaldúa's autohistoria as a method for articulating a reflexive self-awareness that led to personal growth and change transpired as well (Mendoza Knecht 2020; Sotomayor 2020), as have testimonios of resilience and activism (Viloria 2018; Torres 2019; Santiago-Ortiz 2021).

Itzpapatl also channeled several pieces of scholarship modeling the intellectual turns towards decolonial approaches in academe, such as the interplay of gender and settler colonialism (Diaz-Sanchez 2017; Roybal 2018; Flores Carmona et al 2018; Martínez 2018; Lara-Bonilla 2019; Chavez 2020; Santiago-Ortiz 2021), and the exigence to amplify Afrolatinidad or Caribbean-based Latinidades (Hurtado 2020; Sotomayor 2020; Hey-Colón 2021; Santiago-Ortiz 2021), and Black and Brown relations in Chicana/Latina scholarship (Medoza Aviña and Morales 2018; Chaves-Daza 2020; Santiago 2022).

And as I determined the content for the final issue I will helm as editor, Itzpapatl ushered me through this process, signaling pieces of scholarship that delve into Chicana literature to illustrate non-heteronormative ways of understanding intimate female relationships and place-based articulations of identity, and into Chicana art to illustrate depictions of Chicanas that transgress patriarchal and religious norms. Specifically, in “Homointimate Friendship and Queer Possibility in Ana Castillo’s *The Mixquiahuala Letters*,” Megan Solomon (2022) offers a queered reading of the friendship between the two Latina protagonists depicted in Ana Castillo’s 1992 debut epistolary novel *The Mixquiahuala Letters*. To describe the relationship between the two women featured in the text, she conceptualizes the notion of a homointimate friendship, a nonsexual, platonic bond and intimacy, rupturing the heteronormative gaze that has often been used to read the connection between the two female protagonists in the novel. Shelli Rottschafer (2022) deconstructs the short story, “Remedies” by Kali Fajardo-Anstine in “Querencia and Curanderismo in Fajardo-Anstine’s ‘Remedies,’” to reveal how its female characters demonstrate the power of reclaiming traditions and generational knowledge, drawing on a sense of identity grounded in geography. Similarly, the images of Chicana artists are read as autobiographical in Rosita Scerbo’s (2022) essay, “Ciber Arte e Intervenciones Autobiográficas de Mujeres Latinas en las Humanidades

Digitales,” alternative self-representation that usurp conventional depictions of Chicanas and Latinas delimited by sexist and patriarchal ideologies.

Itzpapalotl also heralded an essay about the multiple critical interventions offered by an archival text, and a critical analysis of the limitations of the shelter system for unhoused Black and Brown women into this issue. Particularly, in her essay, “Archival Movidas in the Classroom: Teaching from the Clotilde P. García Papers,” Alexandria Pérez Allison (2022) masterfully illustrates how to utilize archival material to illustrate rhetorical persuasive maneuvers, to map out the evolution of feminist thought, and to provide an example of a movida, as articulated in the anthology by Dionne Espinoza, Maria Cotera, and Maylei Blackwell (2018) (this book is also reviewed in this issue). Oldika Santiago’s ethnographic study of New York City’s shelter system described in her essay, “Homeless Shelters: Reproducing Ethno-racial Division Among Black and Brown Women,” (2022) documents how ethno-racial and gender hierarchies of women of color are reified through the bureaucracy of this social service, preventing coalition building amongst Black and Brown women.

This final set of scholarship epitomizes the Chicana/Latina/Indigena feminisms the journal’s foremothers wanted to cultivate, and I am grateful for the sustenance Itzpapalotl bestowed. While I am stepping down from the role of editor, I trust the steadfast hand of Itzpapalotl will inspire the incoming caretakers of *Chicana/Latina Studies*—and those for generations after—as they tend and nourish the conocimientos produced by Chicana, Latina, and Indigena scholars.

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