

EngWr 482—Essay #2

Assigned texts:

- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 4th ed. Aunt Lute, 2012.
- Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal*, vol. 40, no. 4, Dec 1988, pp. 519 – 531. *JSTOR*.
- Johnson, E. Patrick. "Queer Theory." *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*. Cambridge UP, 2008, pp. 166 – 181. *Google Scholar*.
- Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." *Signs*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1980, pp. 631 – 660. *JSTOR*.
- Rubin, Gayle. "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex." *Toward An Anthropology of Women*, edited by Rayna R. Reiter. *Monthly Review*, 1975. pp. 157 – 210.
- Turner, Victor. "Chapter 3: Liminality and Communitas." *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Aldine, 1969. pp. 94 – 130.

As Michel Foucault traces the development of our modern (Western) attitudes toward sex, the dominate role of language becomes one of his major themes:

"[O]ne had to speak of [sex] as of a thing to be not simply condemned or tolerated but managed, inserted into systems of utility, regulated for the greater good of all, made to function according to an optimum. Sex was not something one simply judged; it was a thing one administered." (24)

However, in this control over speech, in this administration, *sanctioned* discourse on sex did not diminish; on the contrary, it increased. Nevertheless, "these discourses on sex did not multiply apart from or against power, but in the very space and as the means of its exercise" (32). So as prohibitions made speaking of sex taboo in proper and polite society, the sanctioned discourses of sex multiplied. And "[i]f sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression" (6).

Most of the other authors we are reading push back against the taboo, push back against the sanctioned discourses, often deliberately subverting those discourses for their own use. However, the structures of language itself may shape and proscribe our beliefs, understandings, and attitudes of sex and identity—creating a "normative sexuality" (Butler "Preface" 2). Judith Butler, for instance, questions whether "gender itself" may be "naturalized through grammatical norms," and then posits that "the alteration of gender [and identity] at the most fundamental epistemic level will be conducted, in part, through contesting the grammar in which gender [and identity] is given." And these "formulations that twist grammar," writes Butler, "produce more work for . . . readers" ("Preface" 8).

In this next essay assignment, you will focus on Butler's question: "Is there, perhaps, a value to be derived from such experiences of linguistic difficulty?" ("Preface" 8).

Assignment:

In a 1500 to 2000 word essay, analyze Gloria Anzaldúa's text, using Butler's question as your focus. Anzaldúa's title asserts a claim for a "new mestiza," and though the borderlands of her text's title implies ambiguity—including social, political, mythic, gender, geographic, racial, and linguistic identity, it is Anzaldúa's "linguistic difficulty" that is the source of both the ambiguity and this "new mestiza."

To resolve this difficulty, you will most certainly need to research some of Anzaldúa's references and will need to translate—both literally *and* figuratively parts of her text. All of this work will need to be referenced and cited in your essay. In addition to Anzaldúa's text and this research, your paper must also reference three of the other five assigned texts.

As in the first paper, I urge you to look for the interrelationships between the many authors' ideas and weave together a focused argument as you address the question of value derived from your experiences with Anzaldúa.

Finally, I expect your paper to demonstrate proper MLA formatting.

Works Cited:

Butler, Judith. "Preface (1999)." *Gender Trouble*. 2nd ed. Routledge, 1990, pp. *vii* – *xxviii*.

Foucault, Michel. "Part One: We 'Other Victorians'" and "Part Two: The Repressive Hypothesis." *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*. Translated by Robert Hurley. Vintage, 1978, pp. 3 – 49.