Think Piece
Gloria Anzaldúa

In her writing, Gloria Anzaldúa only provides us an outline of the direct ways that we can make connections between cultures. She says that we can change ourselves, that we can use language creatively, that we can use the fine arts, and that we can form alliances with like-minded groups. She does not elaborate, provide directions or describe actions that explain “how” we might do these things.

Upon closer inspection, however, her ideas have in common that they all rely on some form of communication. This is the likely key to “how” we make the connections between cultures. Anzaldúa says, “People in possession of the vehicles of communication are, indeed, in partial possession of their lives.” She also says, “By changing ourselves, we can change the world.” If we connect the two ideas, we see that those in possession of the vehicles of communication have the ability to change not only themselves but the world.

One way Anzaldúa demonstrates this ability to change the world is through her skillful and effective use of metaphor. She changes the reader’s worldview with metaphors like “Borderlands,” “nepantla,” and “the face and the mask,” which describe her mestiza consciousness. She also uses her own life experiences as a metaphor for the process of bridging cultures, as in her description of how homosexuals cross barriers of race, ethnicity and gender by uniting based on what they have in common—their sexual identity. Perhaps, with her use of metaphors, she has shown us exactly “how” to connect. She doesn’t tell us, she shows us.

There is a powerful connection between the visualization created with metaphors and the act of change. To connect cultures, we must all change. We must change our perceptions of each other, and we must change the systems we have created that produce barriers that are hurtful and oppressive. We formulate new ideas and open the pathways for understanding and transformation when we are able to internalize feelings and ideas. We internalize feelings and ideas when we can grasp them. We grasp them when we can see them, when we can hear them, when we can smell them, when we can try them on
Think Piece
Mary Daly

In my life, on a daily basis, I encounter both kinds of rhetors that Mary Daly describes in her writings. Many people I know could fall into Daly’s categories of foreground and Background rhetors or be labeled as Snoopers, Totaled Women, Websters, and Spinsters, respectively. Even I can look at different phases in my life when I have been both kinds of rhetor. However, as I learn more and see more of what is going on in the world, this is nearly impossible to do. Daly lists several options that foreground rhetors use to keep women “silenced, alienated, controlled, and in the foreground” and several options that Background rhetors use to “create a reality other than the foreground” (Biography 177-185). I would like to take the three main roles in my life—student, mother, and woman—and look at how the rhetorical options Daly gives affect these roles.

I have been in college for about five years. One of the most predominant of the foreground options I have seen used by professors and students is the option Daly titles “Silencing and Erasing Women’s Voices.” I am currently taking a class this semester where the professor allows jokes to be told the first five minutes of the hour. If no one has a joke, the professor will sometimes tell one. The jokes are often disgusting and demeaning to women, but everyone usually laughs. This is because these kinds of jokes are so commonplace in today’s society. I hesitate to speak up because I am concerned about being labeled and about the control this professor has on my grade. In Daly’s writings, she argues that “each label effectively silences women because of its negative connotations in the foreground. Silenced women then are prevented from speaking against foreground practices and policies and on behalf of their woman-identified selves.” This is so true and strong for me in this class. I know I should speak out, but I feel as though I would be ostracized and the rest of my group project and semester would go poorly. The only way I respond to this is a masked attempt that I would relate to Daly’s term spooking. Daly states that an aspect of spooking is “when women notice oppressive set-ups and respond with different . . . use of ‘humor’” (Biography 189). So using this tactic, if I see someone about to call out an offensive joke (usually a person who regularly does), I simply raise my hand and tell a joke that is long and clean. I keep a list of long jokes in my notebook that I get off an Internet site. Though this solution is cowardly, I feel it is all I can do for now. People will one day see how offensive jokes are actually oppressive and not funny at all.

When I became a mother, I entered a whole new phase of life. There are women and men who have surprised me by being either supportive or destructive about this new role. It amazes me when I encounter someone who makes crude comments because I choose to stay home with my children during the day instead of putting them in a day-care facility and running off to a job. I love when people ask me if I am a “working” mother. I tell them, “Yes, I take care of two kids while trying to manage a house, homework, bills, and several charities I am involved with.” I do not define myself by my children or think my life is fulfilled because I have them. However, they are a huge part of my life, and I try to fulfill my obligation to raising them. Elementary Terms, a foreground option by Daly, is a type of option I see used in this role. Daly states the Elementary part of this option is about “artificial beings . . . of an evil, destructive nature resulting from corruption of character or denigration of faculties and power” (Biography 182). The Terms part of this option is stated as being “dead words that terminate thought” (Biography 182). I see this option in my role as mother when people use terms such as working mother, housewife, and stay-at-home mom. These are just some of the names
Think Piece

Sonia Johnson is Not Here

I find that I have very little to write about Sonia Johnson, and that perplexes me because I am in strong accord with what she says. In this paper, I will explain how I have so little to write.

As far as I have experienced feminism, feminists always talk about other ways to be or live besides patriarchally. Every feminist offers an alternative to the present patriarchy.

Gearhart offers enfoldment and an interpersonal rhetoric wherein both (all) persons involved in a communication may be changed by the experience. She lives here among patriarchy as a way to transform it.

Anzaldua writes of a healing mestiza consciousness that occurs in what she calls Borderlands. She appears to be more aware of this place than most people, and I have the impression that she is here to inform others of this place of which she is strongly aware and with which she has some experience.

Daly tells us of a patriarchal foreground/feminist Background division of reality in which non- or un-totalled women can engage. She shows (by way of her practices with words and language) ways to become aware of this seldom-experienced Background.

I think Johnson actually cannot acknowledge the patriarchy that the students in this class and the above-mentioned writers might call reality. Not to be a controlling, Aristotelian-classifying male, but to put Johnson’s awaking into Women’s World (from Going Further Out of Our Minds) into a broader context, I suggest she had what Japanese Zen Buddhism would call a Shibumi experience. Such an experience showed her that no reality is set in stone but merely chosen, agreed to, or accepted. Such an experience showed her that she can make her own reality.

I have the impression that Johnson has made her own reality and that she is there, not just objectively but subjectively. She knows her reality is real. She is not leaving her reality to visit us and tell us about it. She is there now and presents living proof that what she is talking about is possible—right now.

Now is an important concept in Johnson’s rhetorical system. Now is all there is. Now has always been and always will be (Going Further Out of Our Minds). Johnson would think it delusional to “wait until . . .” to change or live as you know you should, truly to your self. I would positively term the rhetoric of Johnson’s reality as self-centered rhetoric. Her reality is based on self-knowledge, self-trust, and self-destiny. She even explains her reality with examples based on herself, such as in “A Better Today”:

I have given up rescuing so that I do not help create victims. I am not even trying to save the world any more, not even focused on trying to save myself. I am simply determined to find freedom, right now, by changing myself. (p. 55)

Unlike Gearhart, Johnson does not interact with people or an audience to listen and perchance be changed. She addresses from her reality to be an example of her reality and a guide to similarly traveling women.