

“Latina Feminist Empathy:
Manifestations of a New Mestiza Consciousness in Gloria Anzaldúa’s
Children’s Books”

Children’s Literature 2019 Conference Paper Abstract

In “La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness,” Gloria Anzaldúa defines a Latina feminist thought and practice she calls a “new mestiza consciousness”. This feminist Latina consciousness articulates a way of doing feminist politics that allows for multiple identities and positionalities. It is a state of being where ambiguity is embraced instead of resisted, where activism takes place internally within Latinx communities and externally creating bridges of understanding across race, culture, gender, and sexuality.

In this paper I aim to explore how her “new mestiza consciousness” manifests itself in her two children’s books *Friends from the Other Side* and *Prietita and the Ghost Woman*. In *Friends From the Other Side*, the protagonist, Prietita stands up for her new friend Joaquin who recently arrived from Mexico and is being bullied by other boys and pursued by “la migra.” Prietita appears again in the second book, *Prietita and the Ghost Woman*, where as the apprentice of the town healer, she must go in search of a plant in order to create a medicinal remedy to cure her mother’s illness. Her search requires that she trespass into the white owner’s ranch. How does Anzaldúa’s feminist theory appear in these texts? In what ways does a “new mestiza consciousness” create narratives for children that model empathy and activism? In particular I am interested in feminist representations of women and girls in these texts.