

TO LIVE IN THE BORDERLANDS
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To live in the borderlands means you
are neither *hispana india negra espanola*
ni gabacha, eres mestiza, mulata, half-breed
caught in the crossfire between camps
while carrying all five races on your back
not knowing which side to turn to, run from;
To live in the Borderlands means knowing that the *india* in you, betrayed for 500 years,
is no longer speaking to you,
the *mexicanas* call you *rajetas*, that denying the Anglo inside you
is as bad as having denied the Indian or Black;
Cuando vives en la frontera
people walk through you, the wind steals your voice,
you're a *burra, buey*, scapegoat,
forerunner of a new race,
half and half-both woman and man, neither-a new gender;
To live in the Borderlands means to
put *chile* in the borscht,
eat whole wheat *tortillas*,
speak Tex-Mex with a Brooklyn accent;
be stopped by *la migra* at the border checkpoints;
Living in the Borderlands means you fight hard to
resist the gold elixir beckoning from the bottle,
the pull of the gun barrel,
the rope crushing the hollow of your throat;
In the Borderlands
you are the battleground
where enemies are kin to each other;
you are at home, a stranger,
the border disputes have been settled
the volley of shots have scattered the truce
you are wounded, lost in action
dead, fighting back;
To live in the Borderlands means
the mill with the razor white teeth wants to shred off
your olive-red skin, crush out the kernel, your heart
pound you pinch you roll you out
smelling like white bread but dead;
To survive the Borderlands
you must live *sin fronteras*
be a crossroads.