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Editors' Commentary

BARBARA CARRASCO *A Brush With Life*, 2007

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MID-CAREER SURVEY: Editors' Commentary

Tiffany Ana López and Karen Mary Davalos

We have embraced the mid-career survey as the launching point for our editors' commentary for several reasons. We were inspired by Barbara Carrasco's recent landmark exhibition, "A Brush with Life: Mid-Career Survey Exhibition," at the Vincent Price Art Museum, East Los Angeles College (February 9 – May 1, 2008). From the seventy-two works on exhibition, curators Sybil Venegas and Karen Rapp draw our attention to the ways that Carrasco visually renders the themes of motherhood, daughterhood, mother/daughter relations (both biological and public), the female body, political activism, labor, work, collaboration, and mentorship received and given. Not so coincidentally, these are also the themes that comprise the landscape of Chicana/Latina studies. The mid-career survey is a position of working from an identifiable archive of knowledge and experience. This issue is illustrated by Carrasco's work because it evidences the pedagogical force of looking back, what we learn about our lives as politically, personally, and other variously engaged Chicanas and Latinas. Carrasco's solo exhibition shares what we appreciate about some of the most pivotal voices in *Chicana/Latina Studies*: Cherríe Moraga, Emma Pérez, Gloria Anzaldúa, Deena González, just to name a few. Their work is powerful because it is always historically introspective. We believe that their work generates such heavy citation because they approach the field by looking back to see where we have been and where we need to go.

The term "mid-career survey" is grounded in art history, and we employ it for our discussion here because it captures so well the many ways the contributors

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in this issue speak through the lens of looking back and taking stock with frankness more so than nostalgia. As these works eloquently emphasize, taking stock is never easy or comfortable. It requires keen attention to change. The pieces brought together in this issue mirror much of Carrasco's mid-career survey in showing that the path of breaking silence involves fortifying oneself against negative talk, downfalls, plateaus, secrets, and other moments that masquerade as failure but are actually periods of wood-shedding in which we are working to transform struggle into fuel for our future interventions. Carrasco's painting, *Torture Tradition*, which appears on the cover of the journal, illustrates a moment on this path and the power of humor in generating cultural critique.

In her essay, Carmelita "Rosie" Castañeda raises the kinds of questions we have been debating as editors: what is our experience in higher education? How can our experiences help to transform the institution? How might the institution accommodate itself to our experiences and research interests? What does it mean to acknowledge our multiple subject positions? We are very excited to be publishing this work because we feel it will become an important resource for women, queers, people of color, and/or faculty with disabilities. In taking stock of her life and the institution of higher education, Castañeda employs the term "distancer" to spotlight the social-spatial terrain that needs to be traveled to accommodate our experiences within the academy. She foregrounds learning disability to enrich and complicate our thinking about identity and subjectivity for Chicanas/Latinas in higher education. Her essay uses personal narrative to perform this urgent, critical work. It offers specific commentary about how to change our perception and policy concerning the areas of scholarship, teaching, and service in ways that will more effectively foster diversity inclusive of currently marginalized voices. Castañeda joins Moraga and Anzaldúa in actualizing subjectivity to expand thinking about the integral relationship between the self, institutions, and social change. Notably, Castañeda comes

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to the term "distancer" through her own looking back on the expanse of her personal experience within the academy as queer, female, Chicana, and learning disabled, coupled with a professional self-evaluation of the challenges of her work in academia as a writer, teacher, and scholar.

Margo Tamez shares an excerpt from a longer document about current displacement and injustice against the indigenous communities along the US-Mexico border. Tamez focuses on the personal case of her home community and her mother's land to facilitate a broader looking back on the history of a people who, over centuries of imperial and colonial rule, experienced multiple forms of subordination and devastation. We refer readers to the complete document posted on the MALCS blog.

Marivel Danielson focuses on the recent novel *What Night Brings* by Carla Trujillo, a scholar, writer, and administrator whose contribution to Chicana/Latina studies is consistently one of taking stock, and is perhaps best represented by her edited anthologies and their highly strategic engagement with the field. Her most recent volume, *Living Chicana Theory*, insistently reminds us that we have to pay attention to the foundational role of queer theory in Chicana/Latina studies. However, Trujillo's survey of the field as of yet has not been entirely incorporated. *What Night Brings* effectively translates much of Trujillo's theoretical explorations into the fictional realm in a way that most dramatically drives home the power of her critical project. Significantly, Danielson's article reads Trujillo's novel through the expansive terrain of Chicana queer theory; in doing so, she illustrates the vital importance of this discursive lens in looking back and taking stock.

The creative pieces in this issue further evidence the voice of introspection and looking back through a lens that validates wisdom and experience. Reid

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Gomez's short story tells of a mother/daughter relationship, the struggle of a people in the historical shadow of trauma, and the ways political oppression (racialized and environmental violence) gets played out in familial relationships. (This latter theme is also in Carla Trujillo's book and under discussion in Danielson's article.) Natalia Crespo's poem poignantly registers the internalized voices of oppression that prevent us from being fully present and productive in the mission of our work. The end of the poem verbally articulates what we find powerful about so much of Carrasco's visual work: the frank documentation of internalized anger that then generates critical conversation, and, in the process, personal and political change. Working in the genre of slam poetry, a tradition also characterized by frankness, confrontation, and directness, Lorena Duarte passionately affirms the self, rebelling against restrictively imagined and narrowly proscribed roles.

Both of the books reviewed here perform the other end of taking stock: they look at unexamined areas in our field that subsequently generate an abundance of unproductive thinking. Angharad N. Valdivia and Aída Hurtado and Janelle M. Silva have brought us two books that refresh our sense of the field because they take up subjects we have frequently mythologized: urban border cultures and the sexuality of immigrants. By going to such unexamined places, the authors of these largely social science investigations imply what is flawed about our field and what we have accomplished in Chicana/Latina studies, ethnography, and social analysis.

Because looking back requires acknowledging and embracing the fact that one has a certain amount of work and experience to share, for this issue, we decided to extend the work of our commentary into the performative space of the contributor's biography. There, we reflect on our mentoring of students and our service work as an integral part of our research and publication activity.

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We created biographical notes that reflect the work we feel should be valued by the profession at large. We try not to become consumed by the reality of the profession: that most of us are not hired simply to do the work of research and teaching. Although it is not a formal part of our required duties, we are expected to mentor students and actively and visibly perform the part of the role model. However, this work is very seldom acknowledged or materially rewarded when it comes to merits and promotions. How, then, does one remain fortified and committed without burning out? Moreover, do we even want to be integrated into the institution? And if so, how and on what terms? Castañeda's work offers a powerful model for thinking about how to balance these questions while also working to make real changes in ways that are not dispiriting.

For nearly a year, I [Karen Mary Davalos] have been taking stock, looking back and forward—trying to sort out the real worth of my work and the direction I may take in the next ten to fifteen years of my life. Call it a mid-life crisis or a mid-career survey. Either way, I found that I did not have suitable criteria for understanding my life's journey. The standards of the academy did not validate my humanity. If I were to use the institution's criteria for assessment, I would then deny my integrity and dignity. Within higher education, the validated position is that of the lone scholar generating essays and delivering monologues (articles, books, presentations—all individual and never collective). It's a broken corporate model. Instead, I turn to lessons learned from MALCS: mentorship, activism, and respect for those who paved the way for me. I turn to lessons learned from my family and U.S. third world feminism: the representation of Chicanas and Latinas must be done with dignity, respect, and care.

What brought me to this place of reflection was the "pedagogical force" (a phrase I learned from my coeditor) of the interview experience en masse.

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Recently, I conducted over sixteen life history interviews for the Latino Art Survey, a research project initiated by the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center to document the oral histories of key artists and arts organizations in Los Angeles. This is a project that implicitly demonstrates that looking back, that the survey, is necessarily generative and worthy of archiving. As one of the researchers on the collaborative team that includes Chon A. Noriega, Teresita Romo, Roberto Tejada, and Colin Gunckel as well as my undergraduate student Lauro Cons, I had the opportunity to interview artists such as Barbara Carrasco, John Valadez, Juan "Johnny" Gonzalez, Richard Duardo, Yreina Cervantez, Tito Delgado, Linda Vallejo, and David Botello. On the average, artists gave ten hours of their time, answering questions about their early childhood, education, formal and informal arts training, important opportunities and exhibitions; their relationship to the market; and their role in arts organizations in the Los Angeles area.

The opportunity to interview artists consistently and over an intensive period of time in order to achieve the deadline for the archive has changed my life. The personal oral history interview, combined with the visual record, delivered a pedagogical force that prompted me to pause and take stock of the life I lead and the work I do. The artists' words and visual record helped me sort through these thoughts and hauntings to determine a path for thinking about the relationship between my recent work and this volume's theme of the mid-career survey.

I found myself in the position of bearing witness, one perhaps similar to that experienced by readers of memoir, autobiography, or testimonio. The intimate contextualization of the autobiographical moment compels us to take part and share in the life of another, to engage with the personal story on its own terms. The "I" on the page becomes a "we" on the stage of reader-response.

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This witnessing is augmented by the visual work, which reflects or supplements the oral narrative; subsequently, the pedagogical force of the interview event is intensified. I was allowed to see the spectrum of whole artistic careers.

In my [Tiffany Ana López] reflections on being a mid-career scholar, I think most about how to use the personal as a springboard for critical engagement in my teaching, research, administrative involvements, and public outreach. This has become a vital framework for both forging and maintaining a career in the academy, especially during times in which I feel overwhelmed by the extreme events of my life—for example, my brother strangling my father to death. How does one move from the world of trauma and violence into the world of the academy? How can one remain genuinely whole as a person, including my professional persona? It's a disjunctive move to be in the classroom or at a conference site one day and then the next day walk into a prison visiting room. But in working to use personal experience as a means to grapple effectively with questions central to the work I do in literary and cultural studies, I've learned I am not alone in my travels, and that employing my story in the work I do can generate healing and change on multiple fronts.

I always begin teaching my course on African American and Latina/o prison narratives by frankly stating both my personal and academic investments in the material. As an educator in the state of California, I am outraged that more money goes into the prison system than public education, and that statistics show black and brown youth have a higher chance of being routed into the prison system than a college classroom. Likewise, I have a brother who is incarcerated, and education has played a major role in our different life paths. If I had not had the world of books showing me alternate ways of being and then left home at fifteen, it could have been me in either the grave or the prison cell. This disclosure sets the stage for a powerful pedagogy that fortifies

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my spirit and generates exciting, critical work. The class begins with this invitation to engage and invest on a variety of levels. There are always students who bravely share they have grown up with a parent, uncle, or brother in prison. Often, they've internalized an incredible sense of shame about the events. One student grappled with having only recently learned that her abuelo had been in prison for several years during her childhood; the family story had been that he'd gone on an extended vacation and relocated for a while. For many of my students, my class affords the first opportunity they have been given to think about how their personal experience might positively charge their critical engagements as students. How might we transform what is personally or publicly shameful, and therefore disabling, into a launching point for critical analysis designed to effect change in our selves, families, or communities?

Accessing one's life mid-career is not easy. It's difficult to confront failings, the things not achieved due to short comings or life circumstances. And it's painful to reflect on the moments of collapse, the missteps, the things we'd do differently or take back if we could. But it's absolutely necessary to take stock of what has not worked in order to understand fully what we have achieved, what has worked, and what brings us pleasure. Contrasts bring clarity. What are the successes by which we measure our failures? If we find ourselves measuring the worth of our lives by the success of others, or by a proscribed list of success that is not of our own design, then something is very wrong. More and more in my career, I reflect on the role of Chicanas/Latinas in higher education. It is a huge achievement for us to be in the academy, period, and we should acknowledge our place in history and celebrate the work we contribute. Education enables change as it creates new opportunities for individuals, and, in turn, their families and communities. Then, it has the potential to reshape the landscape of various professional worlds. I'm always struck by how much everyone is impressed, so

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proud and inspired, by our accomplishments when our credentials are read aloud in a public forum. But when we are alone, caught up in ego or the dark times of our struggle, all we see are shortcomings and failures. Such negative talk has got to stop. It gets us nowhere. Indeed, it can stop us cold.

What has been so incredibly instructive about taking stock of my life mid-career is that after confronting my failures (and, admittedly, wallowing a bit in the depressive state such brutal honesty evokes), I've been able not just to see but also to embrace my strengths and better strategize about how to bolster what I'd like to improve in a way that brings a stronger sense of fulfillment and purpose. The terms I've coined in my work ("critical witnessing," "violence as a critical discourse," "pedagogical force", "the personal as a springboard for critical engagement") all result from reflecting back on my personal experiences and the ways they inform, complicate, or enrich conversations at play within the fields in which I locate my work, most predominantly Chicana/Latina studies. We have to think historically. And that is what is so productive about the lens of the mid-career survey.

Perhaps what the mid-career survey most teaches us is that there is creativity from conflict and contradiction, just as Gloria Anzaldúa promises.

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Breaking Silence

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BARBARA CARRASCO Detail from *Delores*, 1999

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NI DE AQUÍ, NI DE ALLÁ

Carmelita "Rosie" Castañeda

In this autobiographical essay, I explore how my four socially marginalizing subject positions have complicated social integration in my professional life. I use the term distancers *to identify these modes of being and doing. To date, my distancers of gender, race, and sexual orientation have been publicly known. Now I make public my fourth distancer, that of disability. I discuss all four distancers in the context of social oppression and set forth the means by which I navigated the academic terrain toward a career in the professorate. The immediate goal of this essay is to lend voice to the marginalizing circumstances lived by those of us with multiple distancers who forge a career in the academy. Faculty with multiple distancers are acutely vulnerable because of our dispersal among predominantly mainstream institutions (PMIs). This article is offered as a proposal to promote radical transformation within the academy by formulating what can be done at the macro/institutional level by staff and at the micro/personal level by faculty with multiple distancers to gain meaningful inclusivity for such faculty at PMIs. [Key words: higher education, multiple social identities, the academy, disability, gender and sexuality, race, social oppression]*

Not without a secret kept have I navigated the institution of higher education into a faculty position in teacher education at a university in the Northwestern United States. That I am Chicana is apparent. A lesbian, not so apparent, but I am publicly out. When added to my being a lesbian woman of color, a secret identifier distances me fourfold from mainstream culture—that is, from membership in social groups traditionally invested with power and privilege in the United States. Today, I am a member of the academy historically described in the United States as a white, middle-class, male-dominated conclave, whose procedures for retention and tenure reinforce dominant social-group membership by resisting support for the needs of faculty from underrepresented groups (Turner and Myers 2000). The academy thus functions as the reflection of mainstream culture—and promotes the

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stereotypes and prejudices toward underrepresented social groups that are prevalent in the mainstream (Crenshaw et al. 1995; Delgado 1995). Having outfitted myself with the necessary degrees to pursue a career on the academic playing field, I am nevertheless aware that the assessment of my professional performance by those in power may be affected by the personal identifiers, both visible and secret, that place me among the underrepresented social groups in the academy (González 1998).

Self-identified from the outset as thrice distanced from mainstream academia, I have warily guarded the secret of my fourth marginalizing identity, which I believe to be potentially the most perilous for my chosen career. What a conundrum to ruminate: secrets kept versus secrets disclosed. The stakes are often dispiriting. In divulging my fourth social identity, that of a person with a learning disability (LD), I agree with Deena J. González when she acknowledges that she is "not entirely convinced that revealing secrets or describing them is a good strategy or even necessary," yet, like her, I also "feel that if we are to change the institutions of higher learning in this society, spaces need to exist for new dialogues" (1998, 46). I may have trepidations about disclosure, but I know silence will not change the experiences I have had in academia.

In this essay, I employ autobiography to explore the ways in which my four *distancers* have complicated social integration in my professional life. I do so to recount most frankly the skills utilized in navigating the educational system and the insights derived through seeing the needs of underrepresented students in higher education, all of which have substantially marked the pedagogy and teaching methods that I practice in my own classrooms. Speaking my voice via the public forum of this essay is a way to let others know that there are people like me in the academy, people with multiple distancers. In slanting the ensuing discussion towards issues of LD, this essay attempts to locate

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the daunting effects of my fourth, until now silent, distancer to more public prominence and, in the process, challenge thinking about academic space. The field of disability studies, which encompasses LD, can only be fully enriched by the voices of those personally affected, particularly those who are raced and gendered. Speaking out may encourage the same in others who travel similar paths. By joining voices, I hope that a clamor about inclusiveness reaches the ears of colleagues and administrators in higher education (Chávez 1998; González 1998; González 1995; Trujillo 1998).

A disclaimer is relevant here to deflect a potential misunderstanding. Living with multiple distancers does not mean that I experience a greater degree of marginalization than do people who live with a single distancer. However, it does mean that the bombardment of incidents in which I feel socially inadequate arrives from a variety of directions. For me, breaking the silence regarding LD frees the totality of my being, uniting my inner self with who I am in society. With this newfound wholeness, I can direct energy toward breaking down the effects of stereotypes and prejudices in the academy on behalf of those experiencing marginalizing distancers, whatever their configuration.

Identifiers in the Context of Power and Privilege

Social group memberships are multidimensional, signified by such categories as race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, age, class, and/or any social identity that does not receive the same access to power as others do. In particular situations, any of us may participate in a social milieu aligned with the dominant culture. At other times, any of us may identify with underrepresented social groups, navigating the rapids at the edges of the mainstream flow (Collins 1993). We dance in and out of dominant and subordinate constructs, depending on the social context at hand. Our social

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identities are composites of characteristics that mark status, rank, power, and value in society (Newman 2007). An individual's multiple social identities are shaped early, refined continually, and tested in society time and again. At testing times, we measure the heft of our own identifiers against those of the mainstream culture.

It is unfruitful to attempt to quantify the distance that our identifiers place between our perceived reality and that of the norms defined by dominant culture. However, we know that there is a norm in any situation, and we intuit our own stance in relation to it. We know empirically that there exists a palpable imbalance among groups in society. As Audre Lorde reminds us,

> somewhere, on the edge of consciousness, there is what I call a mythical norm, which each one of us within our hearts knows "that is not me." In America, this norm is usually defined as White, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure. It is with this mythical norm that the trappings of power reside within society. (2001, 589)

No matter how irrelevant it is to measure our distance from what we term *the norm*, we nevertheless recognize that, since there is a norm, there is also a place on the fringe where those of us not described by the norm reside.

In juxtaposing Lorde's sense of power imbalances among groups in society with descriptions of an individual's multiple distancing identifiers, a tendency to arrange the distancers into a hierarchy arises. Yet, in my experience, distancers cannot be arranged into ascending or descending sequence. They cannot be fixed because they are not static. As I move from group to group, my distancers slip into differing degrees of prominence. In a roomful of males,

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femaleness separates me from social integration. As a Chicana faculty member in a PMI, several distancers jockey constantly for preeminence. In my role as an academician, dealing silently with LD commands center-stage attention all day, every day. Integrating the facets of one's social identities is a constant project. Notably, this process is vastly different from the essentialist view that there is a concrete truth to one's identity (Newman 2007; Trujillo 1998). My experience is akin to the constructionist perspective that "what we 'know' to be real and essential is always a product of the culture and historical period in which we live" (Newman, 36). Debra Connors validates this perspective in asserting that "our societal position has been shaped by history and is inextricably woven into the fabric of American culture" (1985, 93).

The contextualization of my multiple identifiers is aptly described in *Borderlands/La Frontera* by Gloria Anzaldúa in her assertion that "living on borders and in margins, keeping intact one's shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an 'alien element'" (1987, Preface). I understand viscerally her sense of life lived on the borders and in the margins. Yet, significantly, life's potential in those alternative places not only breeds constraints but also offers up prospects as well. In such borders and margins, Guillermo Gómez-Peña locates what he calls the hybrid nature of culture. He proposes that the person who "understands and practices hybridity in this way can be at the same time an insider and an outsider, an expert in border crossings, a temporary member of multiple communities, a citizen of two or more nations" (2002, 753). Perhaps when such border crossings reach critical mass, the border's edges will have softened, the term *society* will include us all, and what we now call *mainstream culture* will become a construct of the past.

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Scholarship and LD

Barbara DiBernard stresses that all aspects of one's identity are "factors in how [one] experiences the world" (1996, 138). Lest it be thought otherwise, I do appreciate those identifiers that place me among the privileged in our country. I was nurtured by middle-class parents who seeded in me an ever-growing love of learning and challenging ideas. Moreover, I appear able-bodied, despite being a person with LD. I am also numbered among the relatively small percentage of U.S. adults who have college degrees (15 percent) and the even smaller percentage with doctorates (1 percent) (U.S. Census Bureau 2004). I currently work at a university where I have classroom autonomy, academic freedom, and the luxury to publish on topics that are connected to my self-interests.

Early in my schooling, however, I began to feel pressures related to race and gender. My primary and secondary education took place in the culturally biased setting of a predominantly white, private, Christian school. In my high school, busing and integration of the "underprivileged" (which translated into "students of color") were the only features of then fledgling considerations of cultural diversity. None of my teachers had formal training in working with students of nonmainstream cultural heritage. There were no Latina/o teachers serving as role models and mentors. Positive representations of multicultural diversity were absent from my textbooks. As a young girl/woman, I was restricted by religious doctrine regarding the appropriate role of females in society. Throughout my early schooling, I was a committed achiever who had internalized the mainstream ideal of academic excellence and was persistent and angry enough to capture high grades. However, with my LD undiagnosed, I failed to apprehend why I had to study longer and harder than other students, obtain tutors to help me through several subjects, and endure teachers' accusations of cheating when I submitted well-written papers. I harbored and internalized feelings of self-doubt and difference.

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Later, having earned bachelor's and master's degrees, my activitism regarding sexism, racism, and homophobia steered me toward a doctoral program with an emphasis in social justice. I enrolled as a doctoral candidate in social-justice education at a Northeastern land-grant university. The faculty and content in social-justice courses challenged, sorted out, answered, and reified beliefs about my world and my three openly acknowledged distancers. In those classes, however, I quickly perceived that revealing a learning limitation would be a deterrent in pursuing a doctoral degree. When I found myself struggling with the complicated synthesis and analysis required to meet the demanding rigor of this educational experience, resulting anxieties directed me to seek answers through the diagnostic testing of learning skills. Because no student was anticipated to need such services at the graduate level, the university could not provide testing for me. I paid out-of-pocket costs for private testing that resulted in the diagnosis of LD. Further testing was sponsored by a vocational rehabilitation program. However, this resource could not help assess accommodations suited to my particular needs because its services were dedicated to working with people who had little formal educational training. It was incredibly ironic that while LD is considered when conceptualizing the needs of undergraduate students, a graduate program in education and social justice was not at all prepared to address the possibility of scholars with LD.

All at once, while taking on this new way of seeing myself—that is, as a person with LD—I was stymied by internal and external demands of what I needed to do to understand the circumstances and accommodate the challenges of this fourth distancer. DiBernard states the obvious in acknowledging that "it's clear that the experience of disability will be very different depending on what kind of disability a person lives with" (1996, 134). Even within the category of LD, assistance that supports one's efforts is defined by the specific manifestations of LD. There is no method nor attempt to accommodate disabilities as a

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whole; there is no simple strategy or one-size-fits-all approach for determining aid for someone with LD. As I struggled to cope with new medications and adjustments/identity issues regarding LD, I felt trapped in a Catch-22 interaction with my educational system. When I looked to my university faculty and administration for guidance, they countered by requesting that I define my needs and develop a plan of accommodation. By countering with this response, the university addressed a nonmainstream query in a familiar manner of the privileged majority, that is, by expecting an answer from the person who is marginalized. Simply put, I was asked for answers that I did not have.

In searching out the campus Disability Services Office, I was fortunate to find an empathetic, instructive ally in its director. She was an anchoring touchstone for the rest of my time in the doctoral program. Even so, understanding the limitations that characterized my LD and translating that understanding into my academic milieu over the next few years in the doctoral program were not smoothly nor speedily accomplished. No more professionally relevant example of academic necessity existed than the looming awareness that dissertations were commonly written by the "doughnut" method, that is, by holding all the relevant information inside one's head at once and then synthesizing it into new meaning (the doughnut hole). How would I manage to navigate this requirement as a person with LD? It quickly became clear to me that, to the extent that my doctoral colleagues could devote their academic energies to their dissertation material, my energy was split between subject material and the need to define and work with certain accommodations necessary to accomplish my dissertation. This split demanded more time and effort and added another layer of difficulty to an already arduous project.

To tackle a project of dissertational scope, I called upon problem-solving skills long since embedded thanks to my young-adult experience in competitive

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sports. As an athlete, I was accustomed to varying my strategy to fit an unfolding situation. Nimble and well coordinated, I was, more often than not, successful in the sporting arena in matching strategies to abilities for the win. Moreover, whenever I have experienced prejudice or discrimination as a result of my distancers, my pattern has been to regroup and move forward. To accomplish this, I have tapped inner reserves of strength, resilience, and survival. In addition, I have practiced the decolonizing strategy addressed by Emma Pérez (1998), that is, the shedding of negative messages from the dominant culture in the cause of reclaiming a history for one's underrepresented group. Rather than "face persistent, lonely fragmentation," Pérez advocates seeking safe, decolonized spaces in which to own her voice as she breaks the silences of her identity (88). In all, importing strategies learned in sports competition, plumbing inner resources, and shedding learned stereotypes and prejudices shored up my ability to pursue what otherwise would have been an amorphous, murky, perhaps unsolvable challenge for me. Thus armed, I navigated the doctoral program requirements, including the preparation of a dissertation.

Not unexpectedly, the subject of my dissertation centered directly on teaching students with the kinds of distancers that I have. It dealt with faculty experiences and practices with diverse populations. In the course of researching my topic, I interviewed some faculty who self-identified as members of underrepresented social groups. From these interviews, I learned most ardently about overcoming my own self-doubts. I discovered that the faculty members defined and sought assistance for their professional needs with positive determination. From my interviewees, I imbibed a proactive perspective that aided in dealing with my immediate needs and also prepared me well for teaching in higher education.

In addition, working with an editor on my dissertation enabled me to utilize an alternate innate strength to my advantage. Through the process of talking

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out research findings and literary referents with an editor, I was able to produce a coherent synthesis of my research data and the literature in my field. In the end, I taught myself how to think my doctoral subject through one section at a time. Together with my editor, I learned how to manage each section and then stitch them together so that the sum of the parts formed a unified, progressive whole with an articulated thesis, the doughnut hole at the center. These are the means by which this denizen of the borderlands negotiated Anzaldúa's alien element, achieving my educational goals with my recognizable self intact. By the time I received a doctoral degree with social-justice emphasis in 2002, I had taught university courses on social diversity in education; trained faculty and staff on motivation, self-esteem, diversity in the workplace, and cross-cultural communication; consulted with community organizations on training programs related to multicultural issues and team development; and, with several of my doctoral colleagues, edited a college textbook on diversity and social justice.

New Challenges, Familiar Hurdles

With a commitment to facilitating multicultural competence in the classroom and workplace, I trekked westward in the summer of 2002 and, suffused with optimism, signed in to my new faculty position at the University of Wyoming (UW). Among forty-six faculty members in UW's Department of Educational Studies, I would be one of two self-identified Latinas/os. I was eager to participate in faculty life and make a difference, despite the marginality attached to my multiple distancers. I took to heart Anzaldúa's (1987) description of the borderlands as a place of striving, imbued with a richness that empowers. I likened this borderlands to transitional zones steeped in activity and change, a dynamic place with a greater chance for conflict, enrichment, liberation, and problem solving. A cutting-edge location that can foster transformation—that was my sense of the wealth and wisdom of the border. If there were any

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professional position for me where application of this interpretation of the borderlands could best be challenged, it would be among the more than six hundred faculty members, two-thirds male, of this Northwestern PMI, where my hiring raised the number of self-identified Latinas/os to six.

Navigating the borders toward gaining the acceptance and validation automatically accorded persons in mainstream society is trickiest in the convergence of identity and daily life. Life-affecting decisions must be made. Whether to keep secret or to disclose one's relatively invisible distancers easily becomes a mind-boggling exercise whose outcome has indeterminable impact upon one's personal and professional future. Would I find navigating my new institutional system less hazardous if I publicly identified solely as a Chicana? Would my professional career be irreparably disadvantaged by revealing one or both of my fairly invisible distancers of lesbianism and disability?

The homophobic killing of Matthew Shepard in 1998 occurred in this western mountain community when he was a student at my new PMI. The horror of his death both vivified the depth of homophobia in the community and gave rise to a community effort to change this reality. I took up residence in this environment with some unease about personal safety should I opt for disclosure as a lesbian. That the cost was high in the faculty community for gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered (GLBT) persons who openly acknowledged their sexual orientation was validated at the first and only event I attended for faculty gays and lesbians. At this informal gathering to welcome incoming GLBT faculty, I was the only identified person of color. I spoke with many attendees about connecting with other out GLBT faculty of color. They could not name other faculty who were both queer and persons of color, though such faculty were rumored to exist. They opined that the costs of being so far from

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the norm were too high for anyone to risk the dual revelations of being GLBT and a person of color in that environment.

Homophobia within the heterosexual majority results in prejudice that inexcusably disparages queer faculty, who then bear the onus of being branded as different. William W. T. Pugh (1998) writes of the anguish and vulnerability felt by out GLBT academics who have spent long years ascending to the threshold of academic tenure. At that intensely vulnerable career stage, such faculty members are dependent for career advancement on colleagues who have largely not engaged in self-awareness of their own homophobia and how it drives their professional assessments. Verta Taylor and Nicole Raeburn, as quoted in Pugh (1998, 101), hit the mark with their perception that "identity politics is a form of high-risk activism." Dawn Atkins and Cathy Marston's (1999) research predicted the risks of discrimination, social rejection, and physical violence both for those who come out as GLBT and after eventual disclosure for those who have elected to pass, a sadly apt Scylla-and-Charybdis predicament (see also Anhalt 2006). Risks of similar outcomes are attached, as well, to revealing LD, since, as Atkins and Marston assert, "being queer or being disabled are not interchangeable or separable for those who experience them" (1999, 4).

Self-reflection resulted in a clear resolve to remain out of the closet regarding my lesbianism in this Northwestern setting. Doubts surfaced regarding finding and connecting with others with a similar sexual orientation. Deena J. González, speaking specifically to the path traveled by Chicana and Chicana-lesbian aspirants to faculty parity, offered evidence to my uncertainty, positing that

> each of [our] divergences marks a special place along the road of accommodation within academic environments as Chicanas have

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> sought to craft an identity built on the contrary historical principle of sameness and on the contemporary (uneasy) recognition of differences. (1998, 47)

González refers here to Chicana feminists who "explain some of the causes as structural or institutional, others as attitudinal and historical" but, in any case, acknowledge that the place of Chicanas in the academy "is not improving radically or rapidly" (47). González's prediction for the future is shaded with pessimism. I concur with her assessment that "our contradictions are really… not as alarming or unusual as institutions might have us believe, but they are likely to worsen before they improve" (47). Clearly, my search for collegiality had not landed me in a professional community with sensibilities that abrogate feelings of self-doubt in persons with the distancers of female gender, nonmainstream racial or ethnic heritage, and lesbian sexual orientation, not to mention the fourth distancer, disability.

That Willful Fourth Distancer

Though cautious and determined about outing my sexual orientation in my new community, I decided against revealing myself as a person with LD. Why such rectitude over revealing my status as a lesbian, yet reluctance to acknowledge publicly my other invisible distancer? Societal pressure makes it hard enough to succeed as a Chicana lesbian. I felt that disclosing LD would target me as even more of an outsider among the PMI faculty in my new university and set me farther apart from those with whom I sought rapport and discourse. For reasons made clear in the following paragraphs, I preferred to pass as learning abled and contend with the consequences.

Distancers such as sexism and heterosexism are rooted in social injustice, and any negative ramifications erupt from that base. However, our society judges

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disability from a biological orientation, which carries with it an irreparable connotation of damage and need. Even racism, which extends from a biological determination, is an oppression understood in terms of social injustice (Fine and Asch 2000). Not so with disability. Nirmala Erevelles emphasizes that the socially prejudiced situation of persons with disabilities "has evinced little political interest among the general public or even critical theorists of education" (2000, 29). She further pronounces disability a "pathological abnormality that has then been used to support the exclusionary, segregationist, and exploitative practices of an ableist society" (2002, 8). This relative silence by educational scholars underscores the socioeconomic separateness of disability in our ableist society, especially relative to those closely investigated distancers of sex, gender, and race.

Not only do we not hear about disability, but we also prefer not to see it. Erevelles (2002) explains this selective blindness as a self-serving mechanism by which able-bodied persons preserve their own illusion of normalcy. My own experience, particularly in my educational endeavors, confirms this preference for selective blindness both in acknowledging and in dealing with a person who presents with a disability. Moreover, the disabled person in this country has traditionally been viewed as someone who must return to normalcy in order to gain equitable social acceptance (Fine and Asch 2000). Until normalcy is regained, if ever, those who are disabled contend with placement in alternative schooling in our country's educational system, thereby ensuring that the future earnings of those disabled who work will hover in the lowest realm of the economy (Erevelles 2000, 2002).

Laura Rauscher and Mary McClintock (1997) speak not only to the economic oppression discussed above but also to the civic oppression that historically devolves upon persons with disabilities. For example, it is common for able-bodied persons to perceive those who are not able-bodied as if their

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disabilities constitute the whole of their identity (Fine and Asch 2000). I do not see myself as a person defined by LD and reject the totality of this perception. I shall not fold up my aspirations and succumb to the "helplessness, dependence, and passivity" said to define persons with disabilities (Fine and Asch 2000, 335). In fact, activists with disabilities "reject the notion that being disabled is an inherently negative experience, or in any way descriptive of something broken or abnormal" (Rauscher and McClintock 1997, 200). I concur with this stance. To me, the essence of the issues surrounding ability/disability is that we, as a society, must arrive at a juncture where people are accepted as equals no matter how different, where accommodations to inclusivity are deeply ingrained in a just society.

What, then, are the consequences demanded by my disability? Although I have a strong sense of self as a woman, Chicana, and lesbian, that fourth divergence from what is considered the norm remains an unwieldy aspect of my identity. Because of LD, my authorship is accomplished in nontraditional ways. I am able to volunteer for and execute only those faculty writing projects that allow the time span needed to get my accommodations in place. My consequent hesitancy and inaction over accepting projects in faculty meetings have cost me dearly when my silence was perhaps perceived variously by colleagues as a lack of commitment, a desire to exclude myself from the group, or an avoidance of tasks, not to mention potentially suggesting incompetence. I have thus hazarded the career-dissembling ramifications of being inaccurately gauged by other faculty regarding writing projects at a PMI where my disability, whether revealed or not, would inevitably result in my toes being held to the fire of the university's publish-or-perish dictum as I tread uphill toward tenure review. Notwithstanding the dilemma of teaching in a Chicana lesbian diaspora, the complexities of this unwieldy fourth distancer of disability, alone, could stagger one who would unravel them.

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Fear—that faculty would learn of my LD and question my right to a place at the academic table—accompanied me to work daily. I felt like an imposter. The cost of silence around having LD escalated with each incident. A measure of my finite store of energy and time had to be diverted to vigilant calibration of actions and thoughts in order to protect the silenced distancer. Having now spent several years in my academic position, bracing into the risk-fraught headwind of nondisclosure, I can verify that not revealing LD has both increased self-doubt and restricted me from establishing a community of supportive allies. I could not create or engage with a social or political constituency for LD the way I had among lesbians and women of color. Moreover, because I tried adapting to an ability model that I could not own, my fourth distancer caused a loss of authenticity. I have discovered that, whatever limitations the institution was imposing, I, myself, was choosing to impress limitations on my accomplishments rather than publicly acknowledge all of my distancers.

In truth, the consequences of silence have been as distressing to my personal and professional life as I can expect the consequences of revealing LD to be. Perhaps opting to pass as able-bodied met in me a futile hope that public concealment of LD would make it privately go away. But this is not an option. That I have LD is my reality. After two years as a faculty member at UW, I finally gathered the courage to divulge my fourth distancer to my department chair, college dean, academic affairs vice president, and the university's disability support services in order to pursue needed funding to accommodate my disability. Because of a prevailing culture of fear of disability in the academy, I requested confidentiality to the extent that these few administrators and faculty could grant it. At last, I have arrived at an understanding that a person cannot be true to herself, or truly herself, if she cannot talk about her entire self.

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The Struggle for Integration

The struggle investigated here applies to integration, both within the self and as a member of the academy. As a person with multiple distancers, I find myself spread among different social identity groups that are not necessarily tolerant of one another. This reality adds yet another layer of conflict to a tension-laden existence. What can be done to integrate such an experience? What can be done to deal with multiple distancers? In higher education, faculty of color find that fighting the singular distancer of race is hard on their well-being (Heggins 2004). At PMIs, racist aggressions—from macro- to microaggressions—create an environment of escalated wariness and weariness every day. William Smith, Tara Yosso, and Daniel Solórzano describe the toll extracted by accumulated racial stress and use the term *racial battle fatigue* to define "the stress of unavoidable front-line racial battles in historically white spaces [that] leads to people of color feeling mentally, emotionally, and physically drained" (2006, 301). If this type of affront to well-being is acknowledged concerning faculty singly distanced by race, what, then, is the affront to the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of faculty with multiple distancers? In a situation such as my own, with four distancers, is the stress on a faculty member quadrupled? I corroborate the exhausting, dispiriting effects of being a faculty member in an institution in which one is outside the norm in multiple ways. What, then, do faculty with multiple distancers at PMIs need from our institutions, and what must we do to take care of ourselves as we strive to succeed in the academy?

For the PMI: Proposed Solutions and Interventions

Administrators and faculty at PMIs can smooth the path for hiring and retaining faculty with multiple distancers by acting upon the following suggestions.

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Create an institutional culture of multicultural competence. To begin, multicultural competence is a dynamic model of intercultural behavior, a model that reflects the interdependence of cultures within our diverse society, a model that calls upon individuals to be responsible for building intercultural cohesion. Faculty members with multiple distancers have the strongest opportunity to thrive in colleges and universities that demonstrate multicultural competence. Toward achieving the goal of multicultural competence, administrators and faculty at the departmental, college, and institutional levels of PMIs should meet, discuss, and consolidate a stance on hiring faculty from underrepresented social groups, ideally in advance of recruiting them. Deciding to accept faculty with multiple distancers is a necessary step. Even more important is to determine policy on hiring faculty with the disability of LD, a lesser-understood distancer to accommodate than others in academia.

Where a commitment to recruit and retain diverse faculty follows, it becomes crucial that what is written in mission statements and the like matches what is practiced on campus. Understanding the implicit and explicit cultures at all levels of an educational institution is key to making the real comply with the ideal in terms of creating a welcoming, satisfying environment in which faculty with distancers are valued (Moody 2004). Marginalized faculty at a PMI that ostensibly encourages diversity cannot achieve to their potential when they come head to head with a covert culture that is disapproving of diversity. The PMI itself is to be held responsible for creating and advocating multicultural competence at every level and, in doing so, trades in an outmoded, exclusive culture for one that is inclusive and supportive of marginalized faculty, including faculty with multiple distancers.

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Develop a clear and cogent system for supporting faculty with multiple distancers. In translating multicultural competence into concrete practice, clearly articulated accommodations to the needs of faculty with multiple distancers must be in place. Writing on women and other faculty from underrepresented groups, JoAnn Moody states that "easing the transition into the professoriate is a critically important process" (2004, 47). To ease this transition, PMI administrators are called upon to provide to incoming faculty with multiple distancers substantive details—rather than overviews—of faculty expectations, course information, and institutional procedures (Moody 2004). Connections forged between academic departments and campus disability support services would encourage early investigation of needed accommodations and lessen the sense of differentness for these incoming faculty. Knowing what services are available at a PMI from the first day on campus—or even prior to stepping on campus—would allow the faculty member with multiple distancers to circumvent time spent feeling isolated. The stress-reducing advantage of having an ally in the office of disability services advocating on behalf of these faculty members would be invaluable. Perhaps a letter substantiating the accommodations needed by faculty with multiple distancers sent by campus disability services to department heads—as is done for students with disabilities—could help both the PMI and these faculty members to comprehend where on the common playing ground each stands and how to proceed in order for such faculty to succeed in their professional endeavors. In addition, multiculturally competent PMIs would support off-campus attendance for all interested faculty at workshops, conferences, and the like regarding social-justice education (Stanley 2006b). The desired outcome is to have faculty members bring their learning back to their campus environments and there broaden the understanding and acceptance of faculty with multiple distancers.

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Just as the concept of social-group equality looms large for administrators and faculty in higher education, the concept of *social-group equity* is essential at the PMI embracing multicultural competence. Transformation at the PMI requires a rejection of the misperception of a homogeneous faculty or a norm by which all are measured. Faculty members with multiple distancers are unique individuals; one may require accommodations that another may not (Stanley 2006a, 2006b). With a roster of options clearly stated in writing, administrators and incoming faculty with multiple distancers together could negotiate a career plan that accesses the accommodations needed in each instance. Among its arsenal of accommodations, the PMI would consider providing such equitable practices as creating flexible time lines to tenure; awarding research semesters for pre-tenure faculty, who are thereby released from teaching in order to launch or sustain their scholarly pursuits; seeing that marginalized faculty are not overloaded with intracollege committee/development work; acknowledging in their tenure and promotion paperwork the inherently higher workload shouldered by such faculty; and equipping such faculty with the institutional resources needed to succeed (Moody 2004; Stanley 2006a, 2006b; Turner and Myers 2000). Additionally, equitable treatment of marginalized faculty members demands that disrespectful and abusive treatment from students be "made public" (Stanley 2006a, 726). Furthermore, conflict prevention follows when administrators at PMIs make clear to their mainstream faculty why certain institutional resources are needed by and given to faculty with multiple distancers (Stanley 2006b).

Provide mentorship. The mentoring process at a PMI establishes perhaps the most career-enabling pairing that an incoming faculty member with multiple distancers can anticipate. Ideally, the mentor-protégé relationship for these newcomers paves a pathway to networking and collegiality and provides a locus of encouragement and validation for their sometimes undervalued scholarship

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(Stanley and Lincoln 2005; Turner and Myers 2000). In terms of multicultural competence, mentoring presents in both vertical and horizontal directions. A vertical feature is scaffolded mentoring, which accommodates incoming marginalized faculty's differing needs in different years leading up to tenure. A horizontal trait might be, for example, assigning more than one mentor to a new faculty member with multiple distancers. Optimally, several mentors assigned to those with multiple distancers would be selected among tenured faculty members representing same- and cross-cultural race, gender, and disciplinary locations (Carli 1998; Moody 2004; Stanley and Lincoln 2005). In addition, PMIs must address the mentoring needs of incoming faculty with multiple distancers on an individual basis to determine whether two, three, or more actively engaged mentors will be beneficial in each instance.

Engage in recruitment and retention. When faculty across disciplines were asked to name obstacles to recruitment of faculty from underrepresented social groups, the primary problem was lack of qualified candidates, according to the Midwestern Higher Education Commission's (MHEC) 1995 *Minority Faculty Development Project: Final Report*. That faculty jobs are undersubscribed for academically accomplished job seekers from marginalized social groups is especially good news for upcoming faculty with multiple distancers. One means for PMIs to attract qualified faculty with multiple distancers and to level the strain of entry into the academy is by way of cluster hires. A cluster hire is the recruitment of several faculty members from underrepresented social groups at the same time into a college or department. Cluster hires go far in allaying the isolation experienced by marginalized faculty hired singly and provide particularly crucial support in a PMI department currently without other such faculty (Stanley 2006b; Stanley and Lincoln 2005; Turner and Myers 2000).

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The multiculturally competent PMI works at providing a faculty culture in which retention has the same import as recruitment (Anderson and Dédé 2004). To attract marginalized faculty, PMIs need to sponsor social justice education opportunities and promote abundant dialogue, not only on race and gender, but on all distancers, including LD. Open and prolific dialogue underpins a culture conducive, as well, to retention of faculty with multiple distancers. Equity of treatment also encourages an environment in which such faculty wish to remain. For success in both recruitment and retention, PMIs do well to offer incentives to a prospective faculty member with multiple distancers. A practical incentive could be providing start-up funds, such as a President's Advisory Council for Minority and Women's Affairs grant for summer research. Other incentives could be assurance that the faculty member would enter the department as part of a cluster hire and evidence that the PMI welcomes faculty with multiple distancers and supports their needs year in and year out.

For the Individual: Coping Strategies and Practical Solutions

The struggle for integration at PMIs begins with a faculty member with multiple distancers. S/he must take an active role, first, in easing her/his own transition into the academy and, second, in advancing the level of multicultural competence within the culture of the institution. The foremost attribute such faculty members as myself can bring to bear is *belief in ourselves*, as Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, and other Latina lesbian feminists urge us to do (Anzaldúa 1987; Moraga 1983; see also Latina Feminist Group 2001). Belief in ourselves must encompass awareness that we are in the right place and possess the intelligence and skills to do this work. This belief must come with the dictum: be true to oneself; do not abandon "beliefs or identity just to fit in or assimilate" (Stanley 2006a, 729). The enabling message is for faculty with multiple distancers to remain strong in our sense of who we are and not allow

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the prejudices, stereotypes, and misconceptions against any underrepresented social group to taint us mentally, physically, or emotionally or invade our sense of self and worth.

Next, as faculty with multiple distancers, we must *advocate for ourselves*. We must listen, observe, ask questions, learn the overt/covert culture at every institutional level, identify departmental power brokers, request multiple and cross-race mentoring, secure in writing any promised commitments, and become familiar with on-campus faculty services (Moody 2004; Stanley 2006a, 2006b; Stanley and Lincoln 2005). In addition, we must seek to understand the institutions' unwritten beliefs and values regarding faculty with multiple distancers, especially as those beliefs and values impact promotion and tenure (Moody 2004; Stanley 2006a, 2006b). Advocacy includes developing communities of allies both on and off campus, which enlarges the breadth of the support system that is foundational to success.

Faculty with multiple distancers need to be openly and strongly involved in advocacy regarding social-group distancers. Pragmatically speaking, a disclaimer is in order here. Until writing this article, I had been unable to commit to publicly identifying myself as a person with LD. I understand personally and deeply that the path to disclosing a relatively hidden distancer is tenuous and that the individual must weigh the benefits and costs involved in disclosure. Breaking the silence regarding my fourth distancer is, therefore, not accompanied by any proselytizing inclination to urge others to reveal hidden distancers. We can choose, without censure, to advocate for ourselves in the arenas where we feel safe and supported (Pérez 1998). The question remains: What are academicians to do when they cannot disclose a silent distancer? If a distancer such as LD is not revealed, how can the individual and institution nevertheless help one another?

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Notwithstanding the above questions, whose answers remain nebulous, advocating for oneself logically leads to the last prerogative at the individual level discussed here, that of *educating others*. Faculty with multiple distancers often have access to numerous forums in which to educate mainstream members of the academy. Committees in higher education vying to claim marginalized faculty as members can expect in them a different perspective, enlightened on the complexities of diversity, one inclusive of multicultural competence. Educating others concerning diversity is invaluable. In today's academic venue and in the world at large, "diversity is everyone's responsibility" (Stanley 2006a, 730). Faculty with multiple distancers must be aware of the dangers of taking on too many opportunities. In any arena, we must look at the issue of safety and the risk of spreading ourselves too thinly to perform effectively our other academic responsibilities. Likewise, there is the pitfall of tokenism, wherein a marginalized faculty member's beliefs and values are mistakenly taken as representative of an entire underrepresented social group (González 1998; López 2006; Moody 2004; Pérez 1998; Stanley 2006a; Turner and Myers 2000). Faculty members with multiple distancers need to prioritize, strategize, and parse out the different paths to tenure that being a person with disabilities activates, and learn to apportion time and energy in ways that will maximize their ability to succeed in the academy (Stanley 2006b).

Because one faculty member with multiple distancers cannot educate everyone, it is important to select a community of people to educate. It is important to find people who have the potential to become allies, who recognize the struggles that devolve from distancers, and who will educate others. As the expression in education pedagogy states: each one, teach one. This phrase signifies that as each of us educates those around us, and they will then educate others, and the circle of multicultural competence will grow outward endlessly. It is hoped that the struggle for integration among faculty with multiple

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distancers who follow the current academic generation will readily access a more understanding, accepting, and accommodating culture in PMIs. Along the way, during our modulated clamor to spread multicultural competence, we must be alert to the demarcating line between educating others and suffering the fate of becoming sacrificial lambs within the profession.

Conclusion

In my view, it is the collaborative responsibility of the faculty, students, administrators, and staff employed at a PMI, together with each academic with multiple distancers, to define accommodations needed to provide an equitable, liberating playing field on which to discharge the teaching, scholarship, and service duties of an academic. Situated on such a playing field, faculty members with multiple distancers could devote their attention to the professional goal, not only of succeeding, but of thriving in the academy. To this collaboration, ideally, the PMI would bring multicultural competence, an acceptance of faculty with multiple distancers as whole individuals whose work is valued and who need assistance to create work that is valued, and an appropriate support system for such faculty based on individual need. To this collaboration, ideally, the faculty member with multiple distancers would bring inner strengths, direction for accommodations, and a proactive perspective.

My life has been a journey to unlock the puzzle within me. In this personal narrative and critical essay, I have opened the door to the four distancers that situate me within the borders of mainstream culture. My social identity is compartmentalized enough without enduring the rippling silence of LD issues. It is enticing to think sometimes about choosing a more restrictive path of achievement, which would be the less bumpy road, rather than taking on the burdens of pressing toward my professional goals in higher education.

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But I choose to go forward with the understanding that I am doing the best that I can with the abilities I possess. As an educator, I savor the processes of thinking, challenging, and synthesizing information and applying the results in new ways. For sustenance, I trust in and rely on my proven reserves of strength, resilience, and survival. I have opted to use the exhilaration and empowerment of the borderlands to transcend its inherent unease.

I am best able to navigate the borderland by knowing myself. Knowing my own soul is prerequisite to understanding the souls of my students. bell hooks reminds us that "to teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin" (1994, 13). Teaching in a manner that reflects these ideas is central to providing transformational learning opportunities for diverse students. I know that I have affected students deeply when they share with me how they have learned to see the world from new and multiple points of view.

One of my goals is to train students to become educators who will foster teaching and learning in an inclusive environment that enables all students and scholars to succeed. I strive to bring a wholeness of self to membership in the academy and to intellectual exchanges with colleagues. As a queer Chicana and a woman with LD, I am doing my work to transcend limiting social constructs. I now request that those in higher education partner in this process because it cannot be accomplished alone by those with distancers . Such work demands collective action. Support at every institutional level in higher education is imperative in order for those with multiple distancers to attain integral membership in the academy. I ask others within the academy to recognize the impact of multiple distancers on those treading the paths to tenure and promotion. I ask them to acknowledge the impact, such as that

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reported here, and the ways those with multiple distancers are jeopardized. I ask them to engage actively in the truth of others and to integrate this informed perspective into their work in academia.

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ROMPER EL SILENCIO

PARA JOYCE TOLLIVER

Natalia Crespo

El silencio es un bicho roedor y regordete
peludo y macilento, con bastante mal aliento.
El silencio es un bicho de mirada oscura y rancia
que sin piedad ni tolerancia, sólo escucha su capricho.
El silencio es un bicho que sostiene inquebrantable
en este mundo irreparable ya está todo dicho.

Yo igual intento, esmerada, cambiar su parecer.
Lo saco de la jaula el lunes por la mañana
y aunque le tengo mucho asco, le doy de comer.

El primer desayuno es seguro continental,
aunque más bien yo diría, bastante tropical.
Como lo quiero engañar, con gesto veloz,
al bicho peludo le canto a viva voz:
La princesa está triste, ¿qué tendrá la princesa?
¿Tendrá noches de insomnio, estrés o pereza?

Pero el bicho no parece impresionarse:
Ese ritmo me suena conocido
Y no me quiero sentir comprometido.

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El martes de nuevo intento engañarlo.
Le abro la jaula, le acaricio el lomo
y con cara de aplomo, le canto bajito:
Me gustas cuando callas porque estás como ausente
lejano y calladito haciéndote el muertito.

Pero el bicho no parece impresionarse:
Ese ritmo me suena conocido
y no me quiero sentir comprometido.

El miércoles entonces pruebo con España,
tamizado a la criolla, al pobre Lope de Vega
deshilvano despacito, como una tela de araña:
Un soneto me manda a ser violenta
que en mi vida me he visto en tal aprieto
asentí bicho asqueroso y déjame contenta
porque si no créeme que te reviento.

Pero el bicho no parece impresionarse:
Ese ritmo me suena conocido
y no me quiero sentir comprometido.

El jueves entonces pruebo con Martí:
Chasqueo los dedos para despertarlo y le digo altisonante:
Cultivo una rosa blanca,
en junio como en enero,
para el amigo sincero,

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que me da toda la espalda
digo que me da su cara larga
digo su mano franca.

El bicho sonríe ante mis errores, pero así y todo no parece conmoverse:
Se yergue del piso solemne aunque es muy muy peticito.
“No hay clase aquí—dice con la manito en alto—
no hay estilo ni etiqueta, no hay Harvard ni *high class*.”
Esto no va más.

El viernes entonces pruebo con Borges:
Bicho querido, te traigo
un poema para que leamos juntos,
de adelante para atrás
y diez veces si querés,
hasta que no demos más.

El bicho un poco se entusiasma y levanta los ojos chiquitos
¿De qué clase social era Borges? ¿Cuántos cheques, fincas y acres?
¿Oxford, Cambridge, Cornell? ¿un tío en el gobierno inglés?
No me leas, no hace falta, eso sí es literatura, mirá la foto nomás, ahí lo tenés.

El sábado finalmente, recién el sábado, entiendo el pedido:
Romper el silencio. Pero no se me han dado instrucciones precisas:
¿Quebrarle la espalda? ¿Golpearlo en la nuca? ¿Dejarlo de rodillas?

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Entonces me acerco a la jaula de hierro,
me pongo en cuclillas, le llevo galletas,
y con gesto de pena, dispuesta a leerle,
sentada en el piso, abro mi carpeta:

Te traigo, bichito, un nuevo poema.
No es nada elevado ni escrito por otros.
Es breve y sencillo y veremos, tal vez,
si vale la pena:
habla de romper el silencio,
pero no romperlo a golpes, a trompadas, con violencia,
de romper el silencio
abriendo la boca
enfrente de otros
leyendo un poema.

El domingo descansamos.

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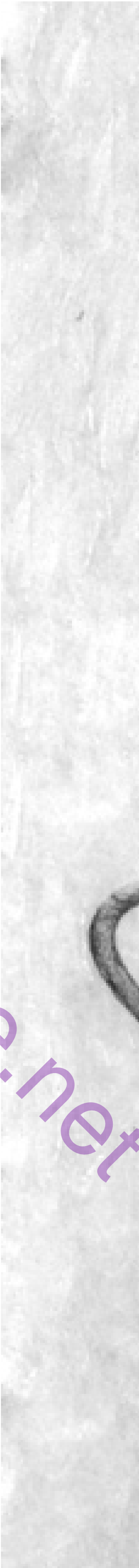
Flint Tongue



BARBARA CARRASCO *Pregnant Woman in a Ball of Yarn*, 1978

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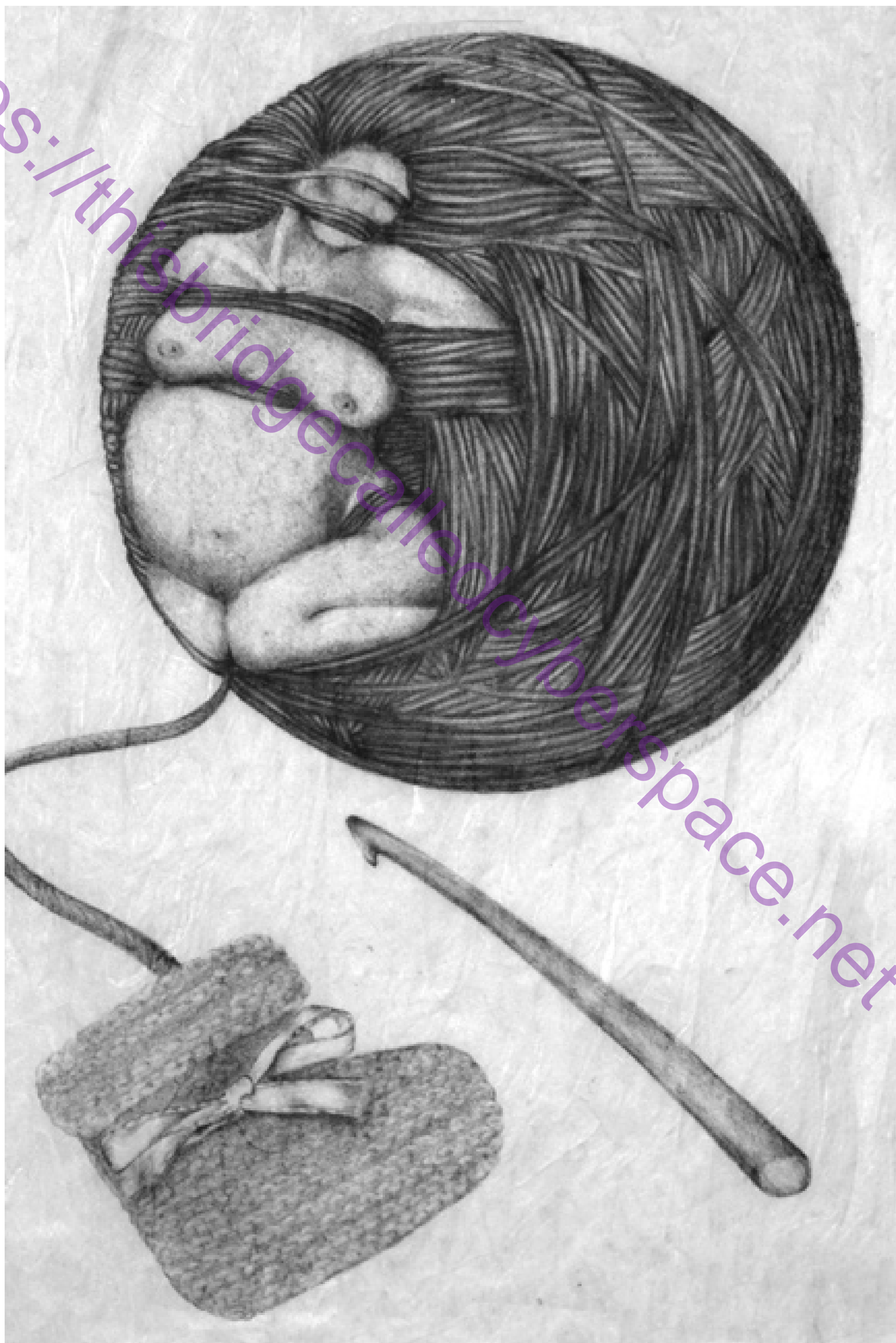

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I have to tell you what I need from God. I have to change into a boy. This is what I want and it's not an easy thing to ask for. . .This wish was what I want for myself.

——Carla Trujillo, *What Night Brings*

THE BIRDY AND THE BEES: Queer Chicana Girlhood in Carla Trujillo's *What Night Brings*

Marivel Danielson

Carla Trujillo's first novel, What Night Brings *(2003), introduces a wise eleven-year-old Chicana who navigates daily encounters with parental abuse, powerlessness, and increasing confusion about the dynamics of her own nascent sexual subjectivity. Isolated from any semblance of queer community, Trujillo's protagonist fashions her own gendered, sexual, and racialized subjectivity out of the traces of non-normativity or "queer-ness" she finds along her journey. The novel's protagonist employs survival strategies that put flesh onto Emma Pérez's "sitio y lengua" framework (1991), as the child constructs both a space and a language in which to speak her uniquely queer Chicana self. Negotiating intersectionalities of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and spirituality, I introduce the concepts of "familiar alterity" and the juxtaposition of creative versus reactive subversion to help inform my discussion of the young protagonist's platform of resistance and her disruption of largely homophobic and misogynist centers of power in her home and community. [Key words: Chicana, queer, Carla Trujillo, gender, sexuality, Emma Pérez, sitio y lengua, lesbian]*

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Marci is a girl who wants to be a boy so she can be in love with a girl. She introduces her plight with the above declaration while nightly imploring God, baby Jesus, and the Virgin Mary to grant her wish of bodily conversion. At different points along the narrative road that Carla Trujillo paves in her 2003 debut novel, *What Night Brings*, the book's eleven-year-old Chicana protagonist, Marci Cruz, constructs a position that enables her to shift from an initial identification as transgendered to a full acceptance of both her female body and her unnamed homoerotic attractions. Despite this layered representation of subjectivity, Marci's ultimate struggle is to reconcile the relationships between her physical body, her gendered behavior, and her sexual desires. She longs for a bodily transformation that will authorize her attraction to girls. Marci dreams and prays for a male body replete with power, agency, and freedom to act upon desires for girls. Yet in spite of Marci's desperate pleas for a penis, she fails to exhibit other key components of a transgendered or transsexual incompatibility with her own female body. Given the primary impetus of sexual desire rather than corporeal incongruity, when does this young protagonist's vision of transgendered identity shift toward an acceptance of queer or lesbian identity? How does Marci's ethnic identity intersect with her self-definition as a sexual and gendered subject? How is Marci's experience as a queer Chicana subject impeded by her lack of knowledge and access to communities of affinity who share her sense of difference from social norms? How does Trujillo's novel put flesh onto "un sitio y una lengua" theory—that is, a space and a language of acceptance, nurturing, and agency—of the historian and novelist Emma Pérez (1991, 174–79)?

Throughout her career, Carla Trujillo has repeatedly repositioned herself on the theorized/theorizing continuum as a novelist, administrator, student, editor, and scholar. Her contribution to the body of theory on queer Chicana subjectivity

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has been both prolific and profound. The editor and scholar behind two groundbreaking publications on Chicana lesbian identity, Trujillo has inspired critical engagement for more than a decade with her anthologized collections *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About* (1991) and *Living Chicana Theory* (1998). Her collective and individual publications have helped to initiate important critical conversations about the role of gender, sexuality, patriarchy, and homophobia in Chicana and Chicano culture and community. Her first novel, *What Night Brings*, was released to significant critical acclaim and appreciative reception from popular and academic audiences alike.[1]

Growing up in an industrial town in Northern California in the 1960s, Marci Cruz copes with a harsh reality as the supposed innocence of childhood becomes distorted by daily emotional and physical abuse at the hands of her father. When she is not protecting herself from her father's rage and flying fists, Marci also wages a heart-wrenching battle against her own physical body, struggling to understand her gendered and sexual self. In addition to a violent but emotionally vulnerable father, the family includes a passive and enabling mother and their two young daughters: the determined, witty, resourceful, and wise-for-her-age Marci and her younger sister, Corin, a shell of a girl who has grown numb and emotionally distant due to abuse and neglect. As the novel's central character, Marci narrates the sisters' struggles for immediate survival and ultimate freedom from their father's rage and mother's blind love for her husband. In addition to the parentally inflicted abuse, the novel details Marci's attempts to understand the complexities of her own developing gender and sexual identities. As an adolescent, Marci begins to experience feelings of romantic desire, but the objects of her attraction are girls and women, leading her to grapple with the limits of her understanding of female desire and sexuality alongside her actively engaged sense of spirituality.

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What Night Brings traces a young queer girl's path to possibility, as she fights to challenge the violence, silences, and secrecy surrounding sexuality and difference. Trujillo's text engages in the subversion of gender and sexual norms through the lens of a queer Chicana girlhood. In this context, the invocation of queer subjectivity is not meant as a static reference to any particular sexual practice or classification or to the sex or gender of the subjects. Instead, as Annamarie Jagose affirms, "its non-specificity guarantees it against recent criticisms made of the exclusionist tendencies of lesbian and gay as identity categories" (1996, 76).[2] Since Marci struggles with multiple intersections of gender and sexuality, I believe the broadness of the term *queer* speaks more adequately to her experience. I will introduce here the concepts of familiar alterity as well as creative versus reactive subversion. These concepts provide a mapping of the stages of Marci's journey from silence, powerlessness, and invisibility to agency, self-definition, love, and respect. I also discuss the processes through which queer subjectivity—in the form of Marci's emerging sitio y lengua—intervenes in the institutions of patriarchy and misogyny as represented within family, church, and community.

Theorizing Queer Chicana Space and Language

The novel details Marci's survival strategies, putting flesh onto Emma Pérez's sitio y una lengua framework, as the child constructs both a space and a language in which to speak her uniquely queer Chicana self. Pérez's model lays the critical groundwork for women of color and lesbians of color to gather and engender communities of support and safety from which to mobilize and speak their own unique gendered, racialized, classed, and sexual subjectivities independent from tokenized inclusion in dominantly male, heterosexual, Euro-American, and middle-class spheres. Pérez's vision of space and language grounds itself in a rejection of colonialist oppressions and in the valuing of the words and worlds of women of color. While Pérez acknowledges the potential for a separatist reading of her model, she offers the contrastingly nuanced interpretation of her

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paradigm's positive, self-affirming, and survivalist slant. She states, in explication of her framework, "Call me a separatist, but to me this is not about separatism. It is about survival. I think of myself as one who must separate to my space and language of women to revitalize, to nurture and be nurtured" (1991, 178). It's important to note that I will not argue that Marci employs Pérez's sitio y lengua in order to "find herself" or to assemble her fragmented identities. As Deena González reminds us, "It is not true that [Chicanas] do not know who we are. If anything, we should suffer the accusation that we know too much who we are, have too much identity" (1995, 43). Trujillo's protagonist is not searching for herself as much as she is searching for the language and community that will speak her experience of sexual, gendered, and racialized difference.[3]

In Chela Sandoval's terms, an invocation of coalitional politics enables Marci to form a sense of community through her "connections-by-affinity" and "proximities-of-being" that link her to other queer subjects in spite of their unique and often dramatically distinct versions of queer identity (2002, 20). Because the notion of affinity and proximity among queer subjects has the potential to cover a wide range of gendered, sexual, cultural, class, and racial differences from a heterosexual and patriarchal norm, the concept of familiar alterity, or unity in difference, builds upon Sandoval's coalitional frameworks. Yet rather than focus on the power of sameness to draw together groups of people, familiar alterity emphasizes the role of shared (although perhaps quite unique) experiences of difference from a default norm in the development and bonding of queer communities. Throughout most of the novel, Marci fails to locate subjects who share a similar sense of difference as she experiences it. Marci knows no other girls who pray to be transformed into boys. Her exposure to media imagery appears wholly heteronormative. Even with extended family members who deviate from a clear heterosexual norm or experience a bodily transformation from male to female, Marci expresses a lack of affinity. However,

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her experience of alienation establishes Marci's sitio as defined in difference from a gendered and sexual norm, aligning her with other alienated subjects. Such connections eventually begin to afford her a safe and supportive space from which to continue to explore issues of gender, sexuality, culture, and self.

One of the key concepts in Trujillo's narrative strategy of subversion is the notion of the productive potential of interstitial social spaces.[4] In an effort to negotiate her difference, Marci must confront her alienation from existing norms. Gloria Anzaldúa's brilliantly poetic elucidation of mestiza consciousness calls for a "massive uprooting of dualistic thinking" and emerges from a space of multiple intersections that present the possibility of new modes of being. Though the knowledge of this possibility eludes Marci until late in the novel, her journey toward self-definition parallels the evolution of Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness:

> This assembly is not one where severed or separated pieces merely come together. Nor is it a balancing of opposing powers. In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. That third element is a new consciousness—and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from the continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm. (1987, 79–80)

In much of the novel, Marci tries to conform to rigid paradigms of sexuality and gender. She accepts a unitary version of sexuality wherein her desires for girls may be normalized only within a male body. Eventually, she reconciles these desires within her female body and invokes the in-between state of Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness. Ultimately, Marci's journey necessitates that she establish a "third element" of self wherein a queer or lesbian identity may be possible.[5]

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For Anzaldúa, intersectionalities of race, class, gender, and sexuality inspire not simply another rigidly defined category of being, but rather a new way of thinking about the insufficiencies of all previous categorizations. Anzaldúa's duality-rejecting mestiza consciousness, alongside Pérez's theorization of autochthonous spaces and languages envisioned and enacted by queer women of color, connects directly to individual subjectivity and especially to the fashioning of alternative modes of gendered, sexual, cultural, and racial identity outside the confines and prescribed norms of heterosexist patriarchal and racist societies. In this case, then, the critical dialogue between Anzaldúa and Pérez swirls around the birth of a new consciousness that insists on moving beyond the hybridity of a few components and into the simultaneity of myriad multiplicities.

In addition to moving beyond binary visions of being, scholarship on queer Chicana subjectivity insists on the recognition, respect, and naming of these in-between spaces of creative and political productivity. Natashia López's poetic contribution "Trying to Be Dyke and Chicana" is included in an earlier publication by Carla Trujillo, the anthology *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About* (López 1991, 84). López uses the first half of the piece to develop the notion of both physical and emotional distance between her sexual and cultural/ethnic selves. This division comes not as a result of her own fragmented subjectivity, but rather from society's inability to imagine the simultaneity of her experience as a queer Chicana. Tired of rigid separations, López's poem performs a union of "dyke" and "Chicana" into "Chyk-ana," transforming two into one, lending wholeness, permanence, and specific language to her experience and existence. Similarly, Marci attempts to negotiate her sense of psychological chaos caused by her inability to unite her many different subjectivities—gendered, sexual, racialized—into one positive and coherent conceptualization of self. Marci's identities are shaped by excess and insufficiency: too dark to be beautiful, too tough for a girl, the wrong body

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for a boy, and the wrong desires for a girl. She also studies the usefulness and inadequacies of the language employed by adults in her family and community to describe differences of gender, ethnicity, and sexuality. From labels such as "queer" to the intricacies of racial and ethnic identity, Marci tirelessly investigates the power and possibilities of the language that surrounds her. Church, school, and the library become sites of discovery as her detective work reveals traces of linguistic meaning in adult dialogues. Despite the nuns', priests', and her parents' unwillingness to provide answers to Marci's questions, she takes charge of her own learning and reclaims these places as sites of intellectual discovery.

In these ways, the novel provides the flesh atop the skeletal frame of Pérez's paradigm of un sitio y una lengua. The novel's protagonist and narrator reveals the vital connection between space and language, as the hostile environments at school, home, and church threaten to silence Marci's voice as an emerging queer Chicana subject. Pérez's sitio is marked by a "rejection of colonial ideology" and "capitalist patriarchy" in much the same way that Marci's experience of sexual and gendered difference resists the norms of heterosexism and male domination (Pérez 1991, 161). Trujillo's novel is a map of one child's journey to self-discovery, beginning first with the need for a safe space in the face of threatening male sociosexual and colonial powers; then a grappling with the language of ethnic, gender, and sexual alterity; and finally ending with Marci's inclusion into various communities, or sitios, defined by shared experiences of difference and oppression.

Invisibilities of Victimization

Marci's day-to-day existence is burdened by the unrealistic expectations and painful realities of both family and community. She struggles to be seen and acknowledged by the world around her as she works to alter her impossible body to match the desires she is unwilling to relinquish. As an abused child,

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Marci offers heartbreaking accounts, in horrific detail, of her victimization by her out-of-control father. She describes a constant threat of physical violence: "Nothing is as scary as my dad getting mad. I can't remember the first time he hit me, only the sound of mad feet" (11). Many of the happiest of moments in Marci's life—Christmas vacation, Easter, a spaghetti feed at the church, and payday—are marred by her father's explosive temper. Marci's narration brings focus to her bodily condition, in terms of both her physical pain and the sensory experiences such as the sound of angry footsteps and the force of a leather belt yanked angrily from her father's pants.

The physical and emotional violence she endures creates a spatial void, as home and family are characterized as hostile and unpredictable places, spaces of constant threat. Marci expresses a clear understanding of the myriad ways abuse shapes her daily existence and her personality: "I'd be so scared I didn't know who I was. It was like I was across the room watching him come after me, chase me, then catch me" (11). Marci describes a psychic split in which her victimized self receives her father's blows while another stunned version of herself witnesses from across the room. When her father leaves the home for a brief time, Marci immediately notes the positive impact of this temporary respite: "I didn't know it, but I guess I must of spent a lot of time being mad or afraid. It was nice being something else" (102). Freed momentarily from a mode of constant fear, Marci acknowledges the degree to which she is controlled not just physically but psychologically by her father's rage.

In an effort to counter this erasure and displacement of her basic rights and needs, Marci continually attempts to assert her presence, her humanity, in the face of an attacker who objectifies her to the point of an almost complete invisibility: "I looked at his face; trying to make his eyes see mine. *Look at me! Look!* My eyes begged him. But it was like he'd turned into a monster, a werewolf

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with eyes that couldn't see" (12). In this moment of violence, her father's abuse erases her. He cannot see her body, the body he brutalizes. Marci struggles to impose her subjectivity upon him, to insist on her presence—that he *see* her—but he refuses to acknowledge her as a subject. Her battle can be understood as an insistence on her possibility—she *is* possible—in spite of her father's inability or refusal to *see* her. Marci experiences this erasure as a sense of both invisibility and silence, as she reports, "If my dad didn't have eyes, he sure didn't have ears. It was like he saw, heard, and felt nothing" (12). This passage evidences the ability of violence to dehumanize both the attacker and the attacked; the abuse strips Marci of her voice and consequently her humanity, while it simultaneously reduces her father to a violent force devoid of all human senses.

Marci's repeated attempts to be seen and heard can be placed on a continuum of subversive acts that range from wholly creative to exclusively reactive. Within this framework, I define subversion as any movement toward the destabilization of existing societal norms (i.e., heterosexuality, patriarchy, Eurocentrism, to name a few) that purport to represent a majority group. I also distinguish between a reactive subversion that draws on preexisting language and conceptualizations to define its challenge (in reaction to existing frameworks), and a creative subversion that moves toward ideological shifts that may or may not be inspired by existing frameworks, but that define their struggles in new spaces and languages. In other words, much like Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness, creative subversion produces meaning by posing new questions, rather than simply finding new answers to preexisting questions.

Additionally, Marci's silence and invisibility suggest that her lack of sitio thwarts her ability to produce lengua. Her experience of home comes alongside a doctrine of silence that strips Marci of her voice and her opinions.[6] Marci and her sister find themselves at the mercy of multiple oppressions that layer

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upon one another, limiting their avenues for resistance. The girls lack both the psychological space of a home as a safe haven as well as the emotionally supportive space of the family unit. The girls' only potential ally in the home, their mother, wholly fails to interject herself into the system of abuse perpetrated by her husband. While Marci characterizes her father through his angry attacks, the lack of physical contact from her mother wounds her most: "I remember the exact day [mom] stopped letting me touch her" (44). When Marci rests her head against her mother's arm during a Christmas ceremony at church, her mother uses her body language to set a clear tone of distance and disconnection: "She didn't look at me, or say anything. Instead, she shook her shoulder and used her elbow to push me away. Hard…It made me feel bad, like I was shriveling up inside" (45). The devastation of this physical rejection from her mother appears to be equal to the horrendous physical assaults by her father. Extending far beyond the oppressive proverb that suggests children ought to be "seen and not heard," Marci and Corin's violent father and complicitly silent mother ascribe to the parenting philosophy that children should be both unseen and unheard—in a virtually unachievable state of nonexistence.

Marci's battle to be seen by her father aligns itself with reactive subversion, since she continues to appeal to patriarchy, imploring that he acknowledge her, without destabilizing the male center of power within the family that imposes this sentence of invisibility on its female members. While it appears that Marci and Corin's father directs most of his rage at his daughters, with little or no objection from his wife, Marci still views her mother as a similarly tortured victim: "I felt sorry for Mom because she was always trying to make Dad happy. She'd look at him like a scared pup" (11). In the early stages of the novel, neither Marci nor her mother dares to interrupt the discourse of male power in the home. But soon Marci's tactical approach shifts toward creative

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subversion when, after a severe beating, Marci and her sister decide to disown their father. When the girls inform their father—whom they now call by his first name, Eddie—of their intentions, he erupts in anger, "You can't disown me. *I'm* the father and that means only *I* do the disowning!" Yet Marci and Corin resist his attempt to resume control of the situation, emphasizing their determination to challenge his authority: "We're disowning you…we don't want you for our dad anymore.…So from now on you're not our dad. And we're not calling you that anymore" (115). When he responds with physical violence, the girls further illustrate their resolve to defy his power even under the threat of his wrath: "You can hit us all you want but it ain't gonna make us take you back" (116). This final statement is significant because it suggests that Marci and Corin have moved toward a new organizational understanding of the power distribution within their family. Rather than accept victimization as female children, they not only declare a semblance of familial power (disowning Eddie) but also reposition the father as a subordinate figure in position to be taken back (or not) by his daughters. Yet Marci and her sister do not seek to dominate their father, physically or psychologically. They simply assert their intention to stop performing a passive enabling of patriarchal rule in the home. Marci announces the girls' resistant stance and in doing so lends a sense of authority and importance to their desires. The act of disowning the father positions the girls as agents of linguistic determination: "So from now on you're not our dad. And we're not calling you [dad] anymore" (115). Disowning also displays a discursive act of creative subversion in the context of the language of power, yet because the shift in linguistic referencing fails to change the violent dynamics of the family, an actual safe space or sitio remains elusive.

Gendered Acts: Feigning Femininity

Initially what appears to be a search for the appropriate gendered space—Marci

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is a girl, but often feels more like a boy in terms of her interests and abilities—ultimately moves beyond the binaries of masculine and feminine and into the unique desires that define Marci's sexual subjectivity. Much of the time, Marci appears comfortable in her own body and with her own performance of femininity, yet she perceives her gendered behaviors as resistant to societal norms or expectations. Despite Marci's minimal exposure to mainstream media, she shows a keen understanding of how femininity becomes a racialized construct. She notes the limited visibility of female characters in her favorite television programs and observes that even the beautiful Rita Hayworth could not "make it in Hollywood" unless she changed her name because "they can't sound real, and for sure not Mexican" (6). Early in the novel, Marci approaches her mother and aunt to declare her intent to dye her hair blonde and adopt the new name Linda Ledoux. Her announcement prompts uncontrollable laughter from both women, as her mother explains the logical incongruencies of the child's desired transformation: "Ay, no. You look too much like one of the Indians from the *Texas Rangers*. Y también, being named *Linda* means you have to *be* pretty"; and her aunt exclaims that Marci is "too goddamn dark to be running around with blonde hair" (6). Marci's attempt to align herself with the beautiful female Hollywood mainstream evokes only skepticism and ridicule from her family, who fail to disentangle themselves from an ideology of beauty that excludes women with Mexican-sounding names as well as dark or indigenous-looking women of any origin. Therefore, Marci's attempt at self-translation (she desires to be beautiful so she will rewrite herself as an Anglo woman) fails to communicate this new meaning of self to her own family members. This translation accommodates itself to existing categories of racialized beauty and fails to produce any new meaning with regard to Hollywood's, or even her family's, colonizing aesthetic ideals.

In addition to facing her family and community's resistance to her attempts at femininity, Marci herself frequently admits to a discomfort with the traditional

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trappings of girlhood. She expresses this disconnect from prescribed gender models through her choice of toys, activities, and behaviors. When Marci's mother instructs her daughters to pack their Barbie suitcases in preparation for an attempted escape from their home and violent family life, Marci's quiet defiance emerges in her response:

> The day I use that Barbie doll suitcase is the day they'll have to take me to the State Hospital…Mom and [her father] Eddie must have gone to the Mother Superior for ideas on getting me a present, because they sure didn't pay any attention to what I really wanted: a gun and holster, cowboy boots, and a hat. I think both of them thought if they got me a Barbie doll suitcase I'd act more like a girl. (184)

Marci grasps the degree to which societal expectations factor into individual gender identity. She hypothesizes about several layers of social influence, from the Church (Mother Superior) to her parents, who work together in their attempts to shape Marci's behavior and being. Her theory of how the gift was chosen positions her parents and the Church as collaborators in a process of gender socialization that is decidedly materialistic: the Barbie doll suitcase is seemingly imbued with the power to transform Marci from tomboy to princess. Additionally, the reference positions the icon of Barbie—with her hyperbolic body measurements, makeup, long flowing hair, and bright pink signature color scheme—as the unattainable ideal of womanhood to which Marci refuses to aspire. In fact, she scoffs at the thought of the suitcase as a catalyst for any gendered conversion, indicating that her use of the suitcase would demonstrate her conformity to a prescribed system of gendered behaviors so antithetical to her own being that she would sooner accept the label of insanity than abide by the restrictions symbolized by the bag.

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Yet in her resistance to carry the bag or "act like a girl," Marci moves toward a conceptualization of gender that provides for a fluidity of being as suggested by Judith Butler's theory of gender performance:

> When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one. (1990, 6)

The notion of performance here is key, since Marci recognizes societal pressures to act like a girl, yet displays no innate interest in the behaviors that she understands to be natural for female subjects. In her previous statement regarding preferred playthings, Marci rejects traditional symbols of childhood femininity, instead opting for the more stereotypically masculine gun and holster.[7] Certainly the weapon, phallic in nature, suggests Marci's longing for power and control of her vulnerable position at home. Additionally, her desire for a gun requires Marci to subvert the gender norms that threaten to restrict her being. In terms of gender and sexual subjectivity, Marci's performance of gendered behavior appears confident, yet she fails to translate this gendered fluidity into a more inclusive paradigm of desire and sexual attraction. While she may feel authorized to express her interest in stereotypically masculine activities and toys without a male body, she remains unable to express her desires for girls from within her female body. For Marci, the discord between her desires and her body prompt her to formulate an impassioned plea to God, and in this case to the Mother of God, Mary, to transform her into a boy: "Mother Mary, please help me be a boy. I love girls so much and I need you and Baby Jesus to help God change me" (31). Marci continues to maintain, however, that her objective in wanting to be changed into a boy is not to

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realign her corporeal and psychic selves, but rather to right the incongruity between her desires and the body from which she experiences them.

Even as Marci's insistence on her presence and possibility as a subject fails with her abusive father, she utilizes the same techniques in her relationship with God. When her persistent prayers remain unanswered, the protagonist calls out to God, rejecting the sort of invisibility and silence that marks her daily family life: "Look at me, God. Are you listening?" (31). She refuses to accept that her wishes will remain unheard and her reality unseen by the eyes of God, demanding that her presence and voice be acknowledged. Her tactical approach to resisting erasure serves her well throughout the rest of the novel as forces in her environment continually call into question the possibility of her gendered and sexual subjectivities. Marci's curiosity, her research skills, her resistant spirit, and her strong will enable her to launch a grassroots girlhood revolution against her incendiary home life.

A Birdy Sin Huevos: Pleasure, Power, and Privilege

Marci's nightly prayers for change detail her specific corporeal needs: a birdy with no huevos and "no chichis." Marci dismisses huevos (her word for testicles) as unimportant: "Why should I want to go walking around with an Achilles heel right in the middle of my crotch?" (158) Her hybrid construction morphs male and female genitalia so as to meet society's patriarchal and heteronormative frameworks and Marci's desire to edit the essentials of male anatomy. In Trujillo's text, Marci's thinking about the purpose of the penis and its associations with masculinity and male privilege can be divided into several distinct categories. The issue of physical pleasure is initially addressed when, after falling asleep so many nights with the whispered prayers of this desired conversion on her lips, Marci awakes to find a phallus, a "birdy," as she terms it, where her female genitalia used to be:

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> …after a few minutes, I decided it was okay to touch it. I slowly reached down. My fingers inched closer and closer till the very tip of my finger slid over the skin. It felt good! Like a Vienna sausage fresh out of the can. Each time my finger touched it, it moved a little, like a teeny lizard getting petted. (80)

Although Marci remains ignorant about the details of sexual reproduction, she is able to translate physical pleasure through this newly sprouted male organ. No mention of masturbation or sexual self-exploration is referenced in the novel, with the exception of this one instance in which the pleasure is experienced via a male phallus, suggesting the limits of Marci's interpretation of female sexuality. As a female, Marci does not explore the physical pleasures afforded to her by her female body, yet within the fantasy of transsexual transformation, her male body immediately presents to her the opportunity for self-exploration, stimulation, and pleasure.[8] It is likely that this association with pleasure and male sexuality comes as a result of a familial and societal discourse of repressed female sexuality whereby women and girls are expected "to experience pleasure only in the context of institutional approval: through Church-sanctified marriage" (Zavella 2003, 228).[9] Such a belief system relegates women to roles as asexual beings until an official union with a man deems them otherwise. In contrast to such a paradigm, Marci seeks sitio in which she can safely explore her physical and sexual being. A creative subversion of this sexist double standard would envision a world in which her girl body has the capacity for pleasure and exploration equal to a boy's. However, Marci cannot untangle sexual freedom from the masculine body and male privilege, and thus her pleasurable dream/fantasy relies heavily on the patriarchal norm of the male body as the center of sexual desire and pleasure. Just as Marci begins to explore her new body, she is awakened from this dream by the angry derisions of her mother: "Marrana! Keep your hands out of there" (80). Violently returned to her girlhood reality, she is reminded of her

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restricted sexual status as a girl and of the humiliating stigma of finding sexual pleasure in her own female body.

Supergirls and Hombrecitos: In Defense of Self

Largely, however, such physical sensations, though exciting and enjoyable, are not offered as primary motivation for Marci's desired transformation into a boy. Instead, Marci views the male body as a site of gendered power that might help her to shed her role as helpless victim and vulnerable child. As a victimized child, Marci experiences a sense of vulnerability that is, in her view, enhanced by the limits of her gendered self. Pervasive throughout the novel are Marci's attempts to reject her helplessness by transforming herself from passive to active agent in her Supergirl rescue missions: "Every night I dreamed I saved beautiful girls. Usually, a mean man was hurting the girl. I'd beat up the man, then carry her away" (6). Rather than being rescued, Marci rescues another victim, inverting the power dynamics of her own home by avenging the crimes of a violent man. In her daily life, however, Marci struggles with the physical limits of her female body, wanting to be bigger and stronger, but unable to convince her family that weight lifting and martial arts are appropriate pastimes for a young girl.

In fact, when Marci attempts to incorporate some of the qualities of her Supergirl role into her daily encounters with her violent father, she once again confronts the limits of her gendered subjectivity—as interpreted by her father. Standing up to "Eddie"—a name that announces her father's failures as a paternal figure—Marci inspires a telling response from him: "Hijo, Marci, what a big little man you are now….Qué hombre! I didn't know I had me un hombrecito. Here I was thinking you was my little girl" (108). Marci's bravery, her outrage at mistreatment, her pride, and her refusal to submit are interpreted by her father as signifiers of masculinity. Yet rather than praise such qualities, as would seem to be the natural response within a patriarchal system, Marci's

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father belittles her performance of masculinity by labeling her "un hombrecito" (a little man) and implies that such displays from a female will result only in unconvincing and even laughable imitation. Not only does this reaction privilege the male sex as the sole proprietor of brave and honorable acts, but it concomitantly limits and debases the worth of his daughter's femininity.

A few days later, when, in a dream, Marci again attempts to challenge her father's domination of her (and her mother and sister), she imagines her father again resorting to gender-based humiliation: "We should have called you Mauricio…You, girl…ain't got shit down there except a little piece of tail. And that, little hombre…is all you'll ever have" (144). Unaware of his daughter's secret requests to be transformed into a boy, Marci's father unconsciously alludes to her internal struggle as he displays an anxious desire to position her as both an unconvincing "little hombre" and an inferior mujer. His argument extends, this time, to Marci's physical body, as he defines her through her lack of a penis, suggesting one cause for Marci's constant obsession with acquiring such an organ. Her father invokes the phallus to authorize his power and male privilege:

> "You're going to have to figure out sooner or later that you ain't never gonna be man enough to take on your father. Not as long as I'm still standing. Hell no! Your daddy here's the one with the balls." He pointed to his birdy. "And he ain't scared of nothing. Nothing! You hear me? And I'm gonna tell you something else, he's got this big peter here to back up these huevos, too." (144)

The fact that this exchange occurs in Marci's dream suggests an internalization of her father's assumption of the correlation between power and the male sexual organs. Given this belief system, Marci's desire to emerge from her victimized state is necessarily envisioned through her transformation from a

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weak, vulnerable female into a strong controlling male. For this young girl, access to a penis clearly means access to the centers of male power. Marci's privileging of phallocentric power illustrates an internalization of what Audre Lorde warns against in her discourse on the master's tools.[10] Her wish to change her body to match her desire is a counterstance to patriarchal power only inasmuch as it suggests a belief in the possibility of a female subject acquiring agency and empowerment—though it comes at the cost of this subject's female body and subjectivity.

The probability of such subversion, however, is minimal, since as Albert Memmi cautions, the two feasible options for colonized subjects, assimilation and revolt, both are defined by inevitable impossibility and failure. Of revolt Memmi notes: "The colonized fights in the name of the very values of the colonizer, uses his techniques of thought and his methods of combat. It must be added that this is the only action that the colonizer understands" (1969, 29). To stage a revolt against the colonizer's values thus is to conform to and be translated by the standards of this very same imperialist power if one is to be heard and acknowledged.[11] For Marci, at least initially, her struggle against female powerlessness and invisibility is limited by her conformity to existing patriarchal and phallocentric ideologies. Rather than establishing a new center, or destroying the primacy of the previous center, Marci simply wishes for the proper (male) body with which to acquire access to this traditional center of power. Her tool of choice, a penis, will not dismantle the structures of power that keep her silent and invisible as a queer Chicana. Marci's dreams for power and control over her own body, life, and destiny are defined by her limited understanding of gender fluidity. She has not yet arrived at the possibility that the desires she has for power and pleasure might be divorced from the male sex and body for which she prays.

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The Privilege of Desire

In addition to providing access to pleasure and power, Marci also believes a "birdy" will afford her access to particular privileged desires, these being the principal motivating factor behind her frequent requests to be changed into a boy. Initially, when Marci reveals the impetus behind her pleas to God, she suggests a distinctly fluid paradigm of gender, sex, and sexuality: "It's not because I think I'm a boy, though sometimes it sure seems like I am. It's because I like girls…Maybe I was born this way" (9). Marci recognizes the impossibility of her desire for girls when housed within her own girl body: "Now I know you can't be with a girl if you *are* a girl. So that's why I have to change into a boy" (9). When the young girl experiences her first major crush on a teenage neighbor girl named Raquel, her impulse to transform grows stronger still, and she implores of God: "I like this girl named Raquel who lives next door…I don't usually ask very much from you, but I have to change into a boy. Otherwise, how else can I be with Raquel?" (30). Yet those afforded the luxury of verbally and/or physically expressing their desire for Raquel are exclusively men and boys, including Raquel's boyfriend and Marci's own father. Marci observes both watching and objectifying Raquel in a way that she openly criticizes. Her father comments on Raquel's body and seems to look right through her clothes with "X-ray vision," and Raquel's boyfriend offers an even more penetrating gaze, according to Marci's interpretation; he looks at her face as though "he was going to drill her head to the garage door" (39). In both instances, Marci observes the male gaze to be unacceptably invasive, entering into Raquel's body, infiltrating her space in a violent manner. Marci does not consider her own desiring gaze in such negative way, likening the experience of being with Raquel to an encounter with "the holy spirit" or eating large quantities of candy (26–27). Yet when Raquel looks at Marci, she does so "with eyes that [go] straight into mine, and down in my stomach. It felt like I was the one now being drilled into a wall"

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(42). Here the invasive gaze is subverted as Raquel returns it, not as an object of desire, but as an active subject with a gaze and perspective of her own.

Although Marci understands that her desire for girls makes her different, she never interprets this difference as a problem of desire, but rather of the body from which the desire emerges. She is confident of her need for a male body and often contextualizes her request as a desire to fit within what she perceives to be Raquel's heteronormative framework of desire: "I like this girl named Raquel who lives next door…I want to marry her, but I think she'll want to marry a boy" (30). Marci believes that a male body will serve to normalize her desires and give her access to Raquel, who, she notes, "won't give me the time of day unless I turn into a boy" (31). Although she repeatedly requests a different body, Marci never asks God to change her desire for girls into a heteronormative attraction to boys. She never questions the validity of her desires, viewing them as the central subjectivity around which all other identities may be adjusted accordingly. In other words, her desires are essential to the subject she is, whereas she interprets her gender and sex as the malleable entities to be transformed. Under threats of violence, fears of invisibility and impossibility, Marci refuses to propose a solution to God in which her desires shift to match her body. Marci conceives only of a body that will conform to match her desires.

Because of her collaboration with heteronormative and patriarchal models of desire, Marci is unable to see how her desires are possible within her female body. Yet when cloaked in the anonymity of a confessional, Marci decides to reveal her feelings to her priest. When she is finished confessing, the priest responds, with a chuckle, that her feelings are not bad, but perhaps simply a little precocious, and suggests that in addition to saying several "Our Fathers and Hail Marys," she should consider waiting to act upon her attraction to girls. Marci is elated at the response. "He said it was okay to squeeze chichis.

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I was happy. But then, wait a minute, I forgot we were in the confessional. He can't tell who I am. He thinks I'm a boy!" (72). Yet even this realization does not dampen Marci's happiness. "I told the truth to that priest and didn't have to lie. He acted like everything I said was normal. It didn't even seem like my sins were that bad. I don't know what he would have done if he knew I was a girl. But I didn't care because the worst was over" (73). Marci's interpretation of the priest's comments reifies her belief that her body is the site that must be transformed, rather than her desires, which, via the priest's reassurances are in effect sanctioned by the Catholic Church as valid and acceptable. For Marci, speaking her desires represents a major step in making her sexual and gendered subjectivities possible. The anonymity of the confessional provides Marci with a temporary space from which to normalize her desires and speak her truth. Once she locates this site and a free access to language, she is able to give voice to these desires, shattering the silence that has surrounded so much of her existence. Yet again, the subversion is only partial, since the imbalances of power and privilege between male/masculine and female/feminine remain intact—even in the darkness of the confessional.

Adrienne Rich's conceptualization of compulsory heterosexuality suggests that "lesbian desire comprises both the breaking of a taboo and the rejection of a compulsory way of life. It is also a direct or indirect attack on male right of access to women" (239). Societal fears of such affronts to male power are quickly disarmed by setting female conformity to heterosexuality as the default mode of being. Such a paradigm marginalizes and/or erases the possibility of alternative subjectivities. Marci believes that the priest assumes she is a boy, matching the subject's body to the desire voiced and thereby upholding a heterosexist view of desire. Yet in spite of such a heteronormative interpretation of her confessions, she is heartened by having spoken her desire as well as having confirmed the normalization of this desire; by her interpretation,

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and what she believes to be the priest's as well, her attraction to women is acceptable when offered up from a male body. The sooner she can invoke the transformation of her body, the sooner her desires will be made possible.

Queer Community: Coalitional Politics and Familiar Alterity

As the story unfolds, Marci is able to discover new possibilities. Even as her sexual, gendered, cultural, and spiritual subjectivities differ greatly from those around her, she manages to identify community within her limited network of family and friends. Hope is afforded via a shift from the impossible to the possible as she learns to flesh out her own sitio y lengua. The discovery of coalitional bonds between other "queer" or "queered" subjects—so as to create semblances of family and community—comes in the form of a recognition of similar or shared difference, a concept I term *familiar alterity*. Familiar alterity expresses a recognition of difference that is shared. As it brings together alienated subjects, it shatters the isolation of marginalization. Additionally, familiar alterity suggests the productive tension between difference and sameness—being unified with others through a commonality of difference. We are the same because we are different. This conceptualization also consciously alludes to familial connections and the queering of heteronormative family structures. Such families are brought together, defined, and strengthened by a shared sense of exclusion and exile from a heteronormative mainstream as well as a mindful commitment to coalitional politics. Chela Sandoval defines coalitional politics as "to interpellate connection-by-affinity: to call up the proximities-of-being that can ally individual citizen-subjects in the great global exchange of capital" (2002, 20). A focus on critical closeness or similarity broadens agency and experience from individual to collective. Such collectives are especially useful in studying the lives of marginalized people, who are routinely denied the privileges of cultural citizenship based on their differences from a perceived norm: a queer couple denied the rights and privileges of marriage, a person of color refused full

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consideration in an Anglo-run company, a woman earning a fraction of the salary of a man while performing the same job. In each of these situations, failure to perform the norm (heterosexual, Anglo, or male) results in a lessening or removal of rights for the individual who differs from the majority, or perceived default, category. In Sandoval's vision of affinity, however, citizenship is rewarded on the basis of this very difference rather than on conformity to an imagined norm.[12]

The practice of a coalitional politics is especially significant for Marci, as an isolated and Othered subject. Such circumstances as hers, of social solitude, are critical because they initiate a trajectory of nonexistence: Marci does not *see* anyone like herself; therefore, there must not *be* anyone else like her. She perceives herself as not only invisible but impossible; hence her multiple pleas to God for a corporeal transformation to make her desires possible. The establishment of coalitional structures, of family and community, underlines the presence and possibility of marginalized subjects. Coalitions, family structures, and community combat silence and solitude: we are *not* alone. When Marci sees others, such as a famous transsexual woman, a young cousin who transitions from male to female, and a feminine neighbor boy, who resemble her in their difference, she sees that what and who she is are possible.

As her journey evolves, Marci witnesses several modes of queer subjectivity that deviate from the norms of gender, sex, and sexuality as established by the authorities in her world: her parents, her school, her religion, and her limited community of relatives and friends. In her reaction to such encounters of difference—whether it be physical appearance, bodily transformations, or gendered behaviors—in the public figure of Christine Jorgensen, in her cousin Raylene, and in her childhood friend Randy, we are able to trace Marci's path of reconciliation with her own queer subjectivity, as well as the alliances and coalitions available to her as such a subject: Othered but not alone. Early in

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the novel, as Marci explains her need to "become a boy," she grapples with the perceived impossibilities of such a conversion. She anticipates her listener's disbelief, offering as proof: "Anything can happen. It happened to my cousin, right here in my own back yard. Raylene is a girl. But when she was born, she was a boy" (25). Marci's own disbelief in the situation prompts her to interrogate her mother further for details on Raylene's transformation. Largely, Marci is troubled by the way Raylene's situation disrupts the bodily binary of male and female sex. When her mother attributes the occurrence to a doctor's error, Marci is quick to question this explanation. "How do you make that kind of mistake? You're either a boy, or a girl. Couldn't they tell it was a boy? Didn't she have a birdy?" (25). Marci's comprehension of Raylene's situation suffers from an inability to transcend the boundaries of a binary system. She possesses no language with which to describe the concept of a fluid gender identity.

Much like her perception of her own mismatched body, Marci identifies corporeality as the primary determinant upon which all other identity categorizations depend. Since Raylene began life as "Ray," her body must have been male. What additional factors could have been present to alter the doctor's diagnosis of her sex months later? Marci's young mind questions both the "mistake" of classifying Raylene as a boy and, especially, the physical process through which such a mistake is rectified: "Mom, if they named her Ray, then she must have had a birdy. So what happened to it?" (25). The privileging of visibility emerges again here in Marci's strong resolve to *see* Raylene as a girl. Since her mother reveals Raylene's secret only after the young child has moved with her family to another state, Marci expresses a need not only to understand this change, but to witness it for herself. "I wanted to see what [Raylene] looked like, and if she still acted like a boy. I wondered if she was going to like girls like me" (26). Her desire to *see* Raylene seems an attempt to confirm or disprove her growing concept of gender, sex, and

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sexuality as unruly and unpredictable categories. Marci struggles to reconnect the socially severed links between them. Will a shift in Raylene's body prompt additional changes in her gender (how she acts) or in her sexuality (who she desires)? Sexual identity, for Marci, seems to be a confusing jumble of excess and lack. She lacks the male genitalia to authorize her desire for girls. For Raylene, following her transformation into a girl, Marci can only conceive of the excess represented by the penis. Although she has been socialized to accept a binary mapping of gender and sex, this cousin's experience clouds the clear distinctions between male and female and suggests that bodies can be every bit as blurry as the genders they perform.

Marci's infant cousin Raylene thus represents the first piece of evidence to justify Marci's desired transformation, as well as proof of the slippery nature of gender, sex, and the bodies that house them. Her disconnect between body and mind are echoed in the mystery of Raylene's transformation, and though Marci is unable to elicit anything but vague traces of the story from her clearly embarrassed mother, she knows enough to draw parallels between this and her own experience. Defiantly, in the face of her listener's doubt, the young girl reassures us that anything *is* possible, even Marci herself: "Just like Raylene, it could happen to me" (26). Still, the possibility she entertains for herself continues to be limited by her compliance with heterosexist norms: she is possible, but only after her transformation into a boy. Yet even as she assures herself and the readers of the continued possibility of a bodily transformation, Marci grows increasingly concerned about her own unanswered prayers. "Where are you God? If you can read my mind, do it and show me you're real. Talk to me!" (222). She considers the practicality of a bodily transformation later in adolescence, "I had a funny feeling it wasn't going to happen. You kinda think if it was gonna happen he would have changed me by now so that everyone, including me, could've gotten used to it" (222).

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In contrast to the proximity of her cousin Raylene ("in my own backyard"), Marci's encounter with another queer subject reaches across social divides of race, class, gender, sex, and sexuality. Marci's detective-like curiosity often brings her to the local public library, where, under the cloak of science, she is able to ask questions about "a girl changing into a boy" (28). Her hope quickly deflates when the librarian responds, "I've been a librarian for seventeen years and I've never heard of that happening. Nor have I come across it in any books" (28). The theme of impossibility is thus reiterated through the librarian, an authorized proprietor of knowledge. Without a written history, without the traces of queer subjectivity in any locatable site, Marci has little evidence with which to prove its existence in general, or her own existence specifically.

A few moments later, however, the librarian approaches Marci to show her a book from the adult section of the library, a biography titled *The Christine Jorgensen Story*.[13] Marci is initially unimpressed, feeling disconnected from the book's author and her experience. The librarian explains that "this [is the] story of a man who decided he was living in the wrong body and got an operation to become a woman" (29). Marci quickly differentiates her own experience from Jorgensen's, explaining, "it wasn't me. I didn't even really want a birdy. I just wanted Raquel" (29). Although she clearly recognizes a sense of familiar alterity, in terms of the shifting between female and male, Marci underlines the division between transsexual/transgendered sexuality and her own queer sexuality. Ultimately, in spite of Marci's repeated requests to "be a boy" and have a "birdy," it is not the corporeal transformation that she dreams of, but rather the privileges that such a body will afford her: the authority to express and act upon her desires for her friend Raquel.

A much nearer manifestation of familiar alterity presents itself via Marci's intimate connection to a neighbor friend, a boy named Randy, whose discomfort in his own body at first elicits feelings not of empathy but of

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hostility from the novel's narrator: "I felt really mad when I looked at Randy Torres. He was a big sissy kid who lived down the street. He didn't like football, even though he would have been good as a tackle" (31). Marci's anger seems to stem from her envy of Randy's boy body and the opportunities it affords him. This antagonism wanes, and she later attempts to sympathize with his situation and connect it to her own. "Randy looked sad, and I felt sorry for him for about a second. How did Randy end up a boy and me a girl? I knew I could throw a ball so hard it would've made his dad's hand sting. But if Randy ever wanted to be with Raquel, he'd have a better chance than me" (32). So in spite of Marci's ability to perform masculinity—in terms of strength and athleticism—better than Randy, his desires for girls will be authorized by society in a way that Marci's will never be. Exasperated by the lack of logic through which Randy is made a boy and she a girl, Marci begins to focus her attention on authority and agency. She wonders, "who got to make the choice of what you were when you were born. I memorized this question to ask Ms. Buck [the librarian] later" (32). Her question reveals a view of gender and sex as imposed or assigned rather than as identities one has the agency to choose for oneself.

At this point in the novel, Marci is unable to envision a sense of self that she defines and controls from within. She defers instead to external authorities—her teachers, the librarian, the priest, and her parents. Her only recourses are prayer and confession. In this way, Catholicism, often an oppressive force for queer subjects, becomes an empowering medium; prayer enables Marci to speak her dreams, wishes, and desires in contrast to the silence that surrounds most of her daily life. At the same time, the Church attempts to regulate Marci's voice by requiring her to promise not to ask her teacher questions "of any kind, ever" (21). The Mother Superior further belittles Marci when she assures her that "[her] questions do no one any good" (21). Marci's teachers

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are part of the typical social process of silencing dissenting voices and unruly subjects, especially when they make clear that it is God who wants to strip her of her voice and discourse.

Her teachers' efforts are largely ineffective at containing Marci's curiosity, however, and religion does present Marci with compelling introductions to the possibilities of queer subjectivity, which occur, ironically, in a confessional. In the novel, there are only two people to whom Marci is able to confess her desires for girls. The first is the priest, Father Chacón, to whom, in a fleeting moment of anonymity and linguistic freedom, Marci confesses before her first communion. This is a blind confession—Father Chacón is unable to see Marci's face or confirm her identity as a girl. The anonymity converts the confessional into a safe space for Marci to declare her very first expression of queer desire.[14]

It is the anonymity of the confessional that also reveals another queer connection, between the priest, Father Chacón, and her father's brother, known to her as Uncle Tommy. At a church fundraising dinner, Marci witnesses Uncle Tommy and Father Chacón emerging from a confessional booth together, flustered, nervous, and laughing. Although at this moment Marci is unable to unravel the mystery surrounding this incident, she immediately reacts to the oddity of the situation: two men in a small sacred space, as well as the secrecy underlying their encounter. Breathless and confused, she returns to join her family, wondering silently, "What were they doing inside that confessional? I wanted to know bad, but I was too scared to ask" (78). On the brink of understanding this queer connection, Marci must carefully weigh her desire to know Uncle Tommy and Father Chacón's secret against the fear of revealing her own queer secret.

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Each of Marci's encounters with queer experience provides her with a sense of the possibilities for community defined in difference and enables her to question what she has believed to be the limits of her girl body. With a sense of her priest's now familiar alterity, Marci reinterprets their earlier confessional exchange: "Remember when I was in confession with Father Chacón and I told him I liked girls and he didn't even care? And remember I thought it was because he thought I was a boy? Well, maybe he knew I wasn't. If he knew I was a girl and I said I liked girls, then can you see why he didn't care?" (136). Her new understanding of Father Chacón's desires leads Marci to contemplate the possibility of her own desires, not as the inherent product of the boy she should be, but as experienced from the body of the girl she is. The introduction of this new possibility enables the protagonist to move closer to Ana Castillo's conceptualization of an "erotic whole self." For Castillo, the separation of sexuality and self for Chicanas and Latinas yields a potential for destruction far beyond the scope of the local and individual:

> All of our conflicts with dominant society, all of the backlashes we suffer when attempting to seek some kind of justice from society, are ultimately traceable to the repression of our sexuality and our spiritual energies as human beings—which are at no time during our breathing existence on Earth apart from the rest of who we are. (1994, 136)

Not only does Castillo assert the destructive potential of alienating sexual subjectivity, but she further suggests that resolution of the fragmentation of sexuality results in the empowered "erotic whole self" that brings together mind, body, and soul into a unified vision of self (143).

Given Castillo's framework, one might argue that Marci never veers from the path of erotic whole selfhood, since she is unwavering in her determination

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to undergo the transformation she deems necessary in order to express and ultimately act upon her desires for another female subject. Yet once she is able to reconcile her experience of these desires from within her gendered female body, Marci actively begins to reject the fragmentation and incompletion that motivated her earlier wish for corporeal transformation.

Speaking Silences and Decoding Difference

In terms of Marci's lengua, though she does not arrive at a comfortable term of self-definition by the close of the novel, she actively engages with the available linguistic descriptors, and takes on the role of detective as she deciphers the meanings of adult references such as "queer," "jotito," and "homosexual," especially as they pertain to her family, her community, and herself. Self-definition is initially filtered through a dominant view of the limits of female sexuality and desire, and Marci must forge her own interpretive model for understanding and articulating her desiring self.

The issue of Marci's space is intertwined with her search for an authentic and unaffected voice. She comes to a preliminary understanding of the language that surrounds gender, sexuality, religion, and difference through her own investigations and observations. She begins with an analysis of the language spoken by those around her, namely her father, who frequently directs the term "queer" at anyone who displeases or confounds him. Coupling this with dictionary research, Marci begins to formulate a bank of meanings from which to understand the concept of queerness. Initially, Eddie uses the term to describe churchgoers or, as he terms them, "holy rollers." Subsequently, he spits the word as a form of insult during a heated argument with his brother, Marci's Uncle Tommy. Through her research, Marci first encounters the descriptor "homosexual" and begins to unravel its connection to Uncle Tommy's earlier encounter with the priest in the confessional and her own desires for girls. Still,

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Marci's view of her own sexual difference is limited by her lack of exposure to the related terminology. Language is paramount in Marci's inability to understand her queer sexuality, both because she does not understand the lexicon, and because she does not have access to a community that is defined by such descriptors. As she pieces together the connections between religion, sexuality, and difference, she attempts to place herself within a queer continuum:

> So if being in the church makes you a homosexual queer, or a man loving a man, or lady loving a lady makes you a homosexual queer, then this must be what I am. I'm a girl. I like Raquel. That makes me a girl liking a girl, which is a homosexual queer. And since I like God, Baby Jesus, and Mary, and they're the church, then I must be a double homosexual queer…But then what happens if I want to be a boy. Does that make me a triple? (137)

However, even as Marci approaches a linguistic mapping of her different desires, she still lacks a more immediate experience of familiar alterity, since each of the members of her queer community are male or transsexual, and none of them is able to speak to Marci's exact situation as a young girl attracted to other girls. Audre Lorde argues that the master's tools are unable to deconstruct the master's house and proposes that rather than defining oneself and one's struggles in terms of prior revolutionary acts, women of color might increase the efficacy of their movements by working with homegrown tools (100). Indeed, one of Marci's obstacles in her search for lengua requires her to move beyond the discursive tools of patriarchy and heterosexism and into a new consciousness and an acceptance of her unique voice and language.

At the close of the novel, Marci and her sister engage in a final horrifying struggle with their abusive father. As he beats Marci, Corin grabs her father's

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rifle and shoots him in the back. The girls seize the chaotic opportunity, amid policemen and sirens, to escape to a bus headed toward their grandmother's home in New Mexico. They are received with open arms, and although their parents never acknowledge the truth about the shooting, they do not make any attempt to bring the girls home again. In the movement from their father's misogynist dictatorship to their grandmother's loving matriarchy, the girls are finally able to enjoy a structural sense of sitio and the freedom to speak and think freely as they develop their own lenguas.

Marci's struggle with gender and sexuality continues even as she elects to stop attending church services. She now expresses distrust of both the institution of Catholicism and the powers held within it. Her rejection of the physical structure of the church and the doctrine offered by the priests and nuns stands as a moment of agency and autonomy. Largely, Marci's prayers are supplications for the changes she believed would correct the deviance of her mismatched body and desire. At the close of the novel, Marci arrives at a semblance of acceptance: "All of a sudden it hits me. I'm never gonna be a boy. No matter how hard I pray, or how good I try to be, I'll always be a girl…If I'm gonna stay a girl I'd better figure out what to do" (223). It is in her acceptance that Marci begins to enact a mode of creative subversion. Rather than seek out a solution that allows her to conform to societal expectations, she begins to assess her body and desires as immutable components of her being, not anomalies to be remedied through divine or medical intervention. When she transforms her spirituality from a faith in God to a belief in her own self-worth and possibility, Marci moves toward a self-designed "alternative spirituality" (Anderson 2005, 24). This spirituality rejects the male-centered and Eurocentric structures of power that discouraged her from speaking, questioning, or desiring in ways that were intuitive for her. Rather than a simplistic reversal of male dominance and whiteness, Marci and Corin are able to locate sitio outside male dominance and

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abuse, and in spite of Marci's persistent desire to become a strong and powerful boy, she ultimately discovers the power, within her own female body, to free herself and her sister. Perhaps this initial encounter with a female-centered community enables Marci also to make a final movement toward self-acceptance and the related language needed to express her queer self.

Chicana Girlhoods/Lesbian Possibilities

In *With Her Machete in Her Hands: Reading Chicana Lesbians,* Catrióna Rueda Esquibel offers a mapping of literary representations of Chicana girlhood as potential spaces of sexual exploration, self-definition, and agency. Although she terms many of these spaces "restrictive," she also posits that "young Chicanas are encouraged to form lifelong female friendships, and it is the intimacy of these relationships that often provides the context for lesbian desire" (2006, 91). This understanding of *comadrazgo*—as a system of support for women's relationships with each other—is largely absent from Trujillo's text. In part, this is due to the familial violence that shatters any sense of collectivity, spreading victimization equally among the female family members, pitting father against mother, mother against daughters, and daughters against both their parents. Certainly Marci's struggle to understand her own desires is complicated by the absence of a community or familial tradition of comadrazgo; however, at the close of the narrative, she encounters a coalitional connection with another young girl, Robbie, who confesses to a similar desire for girls. This brief moment bears witness to the possibilities of Rueda Esquibel's theory of Chicana girlhoods. When asked by her new friend if she believes their desire is a sin, Marci quickly replies, "No, I don't" (241). The immediacy with which she responds illustrates how her new spirituality makes a space for her desire and allows her to speak this desire without shame. When the two share their first kiss, Marci is left speechless but narrates her final thoughts to the reader: "I didn't know what to do or think. But for once I could say I felt so good it didn't matter" (242).

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For Marci Cruz, a sense of self is disrupted and disjointed through her repeated requests for a male body. Yet, by the close of the novel, Marci's fragmentation diminishes and her body is made whole by rejecting the impossibility of her desires while asserting her unique, gendered identity and her active subjecthood. Her final statement, reveling in the pleasure of her connection to Robbie, rather than considering its social implications, completes Marci's circle of self-definition. In the passage that began this article, Marci expressed her desire to have a boy's body, and although she ultimately finds this wish impossible, she manages to find resolution to her seeming corporeal unrest. In her prioritization of pleasure ("I felt so good it didn't matter"), she is able to transgress the limitations of heteronormativity and fashion a new desire that involves self-definition and self-expression.

Trujillo's novel and its strong, young protagonist effectively address the issues of multiple marginalization and the consequent societal perception of a fragmented subjectivity. Marci is forced to confront worlds that refuse to see her unique and multiple layers of subjectivity. Daily, she attempts to reconcile a world incapable of seeing the queer Chicana she is becoming. Rather than rebel against the limited options afforded to her by dominant society, Marci initially internalizes the sexist and heterosexist attitudes from her surroundings, believing that her queer female subjectivity is in fact impossible. Trujillo's narrative offers a glimpse into self-recovery as Marci is able to contextualize her own desires for girls within a queer community, thereby enabling her to grasp her ultimate possibility. Trujillo's narrative evidences the practice of storytelling to illustrate how the lack of visible queer Latina representation has less to do with impossibilities of being than failures of seeing. For Trujillo's protagonist, her place to begin—a wholly unique sitio y lengua—emerges at the close of the novel as a newly discovered alternative to dichotomies and comes from the knowledge that her identification as girl does not preclude her desire for other

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girls. Her desires, her body, her experience, and her subjectivity move into the realm of productive and passionate possibility.

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Notes

[1] Trujillo was awarded the Marmol Prize in 2003 for *What Night Brings*. The novel was also a runner-up for the Astraea Lesbian Writers Fund Award and received an honorable mention in the Writers at Work competition. Esteemed authors Sandra Cisneros and Dorothy Allison, alongside mainstream publications such as *Hispanic Magazine*, *Booklist*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *Lambda Book Report*, have praised *What Night Brings* for its powerful narrative and memorable characters.

[2] As a designator of sexual subjectivity, the term *queer* acquired popularity in the 1990s as a broader alternative to the more limiting terms *lesbian* and *gay*, although some dislike it as a nongendered referent.

[3] Bernice Zamora's foundational piece "So Not to Be Mottled" offers a poetic manifesto of intersectional identities (1993, 78).

[4] Octavio Paz's discourse on gender, and especially female sexuality, presents a problematic view, arising from a static and binary view of human subjectivity. In particular, see his paradigm of *la chingada/el chingón* for a rigidly dichotomous representation of gender expectations and his analysis of *el pachuco* for a similar elucidation of ethnic and cultural identity (1961). Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness intervenes into these dichotomies, offering alternatives to "either/or" subjectivity (1987).

[5] Like Anzaldúa, Jacqueline M. Martínez argues for the subversive potential of Chicana lesbian subjectivity. Martínez focuses on the seeming unintelligibility of Chicana lesbian identity within an Anglo-dominant heteronormative worldview. Martínez suggests that through the enacting of "radical ambiguities," Chicana lesbian subjectivity challenges colonialist oppressions and offers the promise of radical transformation (2000, 62-64).

[6] bell hooks theorizes about the distinction between a privileged view of home as a safe and "politically neutral" site and a reclamation of the notion of home by African American women as a site of resistance and empowerment. Marci is unable to maneuver this transformation and ultimately she must abandon her home for an alternative "homeplace" (1990).

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[7] For another Chicana lesbian account of the gender politics of childhood playthings, see Monica Palacios (1998).

[8] Pérez notes that envy of the male phallus is largely a myth of male "centralist" theorists such as Sigmund Freud and Michel Foucault (1991, 173). However, Marci's strong desire for a penis seems to necessitate an alternate version of penis envy, since Marci wishes for male genitalia so as to authorize her attraction to girls and for the purposes of sexual pleasure. Cherríe Moraga interprets her own childhood dream of a female body with an "out of control" penis as a suggestion of sexual potency and the desire to move sexually from penetrated to penetrator (1983, 119). Certainly, the relevance of the phallus cannot be untangled from lesbian desire and sexuality, and Marci's emphasis on the pleasure and privilege of the penis illustrates one of many points along a continuum of lesbian/queer female desire.

[9] Zavella's interviews with Chicana and Mexican women reveal patriarchal strategies for silencing women's desires. The women interviewed also suggested a challenge to the virgin-whore dichotomy with the role of "la escandalosa," who emerges from sexual repression to embraces her desires and pleasures (2003, 228). Trujillo's novel suggests the history of una escandalosa in the making, since Marci's sexuality remains largely a private identity.

[10] Lorde advises against any subversive act translated into the language and tools of a ruling power, since "the master's tools will not dismantle the master's house" (1984, 110). Her discussion of the insufficiency of an oppressor's tactics to interrupt systems of oppression insists on a critical foundation of autochthonous theories of resistance around which U.S. Latina scholars such as Emma Pérez (sitio y lengua), Aurora Levins Morales (certified organic intellectual), and the Latina Feminist Group (Papelitos Guardados) have developed frameworks of individual and collective identity.

[11] Many feminist and postcolonial theorists have discussed the role of language in frameworks of colonial power and subsequent revolutions waged by colonized subjects. Emma Pérez posits that both gender and racial oppressions necessitate that women of color find alternate modes of communication apart from "sexual-racial violence mirrored in language, in words. A speculum of conquest to 'penetrate' further" (1991, 175). Frantz Fanon notes, "A man who has language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language" (1967, 18). However, under the structures of colonial power, Fanon positions the acquisition of language as a complicated transformation for the colonized subject. Therefore, the colonized subject who can successfully learn the colonizer's language and act out cultural norms in essence "becomes whiter," at least on the level of social performance. Concomitantly, any revolution voiced using a colonial language risks being defined and perhaps doomed by a conformity to the colonizer's ideals.

[12] Because of the focus on inclusion and familial ties, I feel the concept of familiar alterity has uniquely viable applications for the LGBTQ community as well as for people of color. However, the framework is relevant in many other circumstances wherein individuals seek community under the bond of shared difference and collective alienation from a ruling majority.

[13] Jorgensen, born George Jorgensen, made the transition from male to female in 1952, emerging

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as one of the first widely publicized transsexuals in the United States popular media; see Jorgensen 2000.

[14] Here again I'm using *queer* not necessarily in the sense of lesbian, but simply non-normative sexual desire. Marci understands the stigma that will likely be attached to her desires, and she is cautious about expressing them only when they may not be tied to her name or identity. Her fear of negative response situates her desires as queer long before she identifies them as lesbian or homosexual.

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POEMS FOR THE ILLITERATE

Lorena Duarte

poetry, poems, and poem fuckers
poem filchers and poem lovers.

5 friends sit in a circle
crudely discussing the future of:
poetry.

somewhere between
ars poetica academics and
Mr. and Mrs. Slamming Diva and Don

I say, but poetry,
poetry used to be
recited by illiterates

the slammed out word didn't
devour the written word back then,
it put it on everyone's lips, in their minds

Rubén Darío, García Lorca
broke out of quiet mouths

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and never because it was manageable or mild
but because it was true,
was hard, was precise,
it spoke to the impalpable in us all.

celebrated in meters,
captured by rhymes
these are the songs we need to revive.

in friends
with circles
to put life into
life
poetry, love songs—

so screw the debates and say
this is a pretty, useless song,
a flower ode to the bumblebee song

and

it's a guacamole song
eaten on the streets
on mountain tops
in between greasy tortillas.

give it to us all:

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the tinkling laugh
the babies screaming and
the sweetness dying
the time clock ticking
and the pan dulce dipped in chocolate.

our songs are tapped out on boxes,
drummed through
ill-mannered fingers

in circles, with friends
unraveling this—
my opus,
our songs.

here we find
the ruby diaphanous lines
the fluttering contortionist
happiness that lets us go on

because if we could—
I think we would find a less ruthless life
at least I'd find at least a disease that pays
suffer less barbed wire nights

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but that is not how we are born
so
it will be this—
our circles,
friends,
songs, words,
it will be blue,
it will be shelves of books,
bad infomercials,
crooked ends,
wind, ash,
notes, castañuelas, and picture frames.

it will be grace, it will be yellow,
it will be our centers,
your sexiest kiss,
and the moment you knotted up my soul.

the world will and does need all these songs.

so Mr. Arched Eyebrows, put your goddamned book down
and Mrs. Slamming Diva, take great care
of what and how you write

this is no ego frivolous pastime

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LORENA DUARTE

we are demons
we are doves
we are songs
and silent screams

we are singing minstrels
town truth criers.

we are people
writing riots
into life breaking
realities

making circles,
songs,
saying:

I give you these gems
I give you these gems
I give you these gems

my friends, my circle, my 5
my Harvard professors,
and my Tía who can barely write

spreading the truths I heard tonight
about poetry, poems, and poem fuckers
poem filchers and poem lovers.

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FLINT TONGUE

Lorena Duarte

when I was 4
I nearly cut off my own tongue
slipped and neatly pierced it with my teeth,

hung on by two little bits.

If you don't believe me, kiss me and you will feel the scar.

was reminded of this recently when a friend told me that
according to the Mexica calendar, the year of my birth is called Tekpatl,
Tekpatl, which means flint,
which is a metaphor for tongue, words, especially words that are
piercing.

the stars then, devised me
a flint tongue,
a split and shattered tongue
a patched up, miracle tongue
a survivor tongue
a grateful tongue, aware of its nearly mute destiny
an urgent tongue
made of words that are piercing
made for words that are piercing
a biting tongue, a bitten tongue

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a tongue made for lashings
and for pleasure.

the blades are sharpened
and ready,

the bloody mouth
she, ready to speak:

the Bible says that the stroke of the tongue breaketh the bones
many have fallen by the edge of the sword;
but not so many as have fallen by the tongue.

though I don't believe, I do agree
because after all, the tongue is the strongest muscle in the body
in technical terms,
it is a muscular hydrostat, similar to the arms of an octopus,
and just as clingy
able to suffocate, crush, and grab

this, this, this—is a battling tongue
a honey tongue—
a tongue ready to renounce traitors and fools
or to mediate peaceful endings
tell the stories of those whose tongues have been cut out and silenced
a surrogate tongue
a tongue tied up in knots,
dumb and frozen

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by the world's weeping.

a tongue that screams
a tongue that keens
a problem tongue for mothers, preachers, and politicians,
who gets told
young lady hold your tongue

as if.

though I will admit, at times
the cat's got my tongue and
I become
a confused tongue
a border tongue
she—who speaks in two tongues
and forgets what she is saying
forgets which one she is speaking
forgets which is the common tongue for that day
polite and smooth?
or peppered and stewed?

because I am a chameleon tongue that will
unroll, unfurl,
unhinge—you—

tongue-twisted
tongue-tied

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tongue chopped up and fried,
which is my favorite kind of taco by the way,
but I digress and so
allow me also to confess that I love boys with bold tongues,
fierce tongues, brave tongues,
tongues not afraid to say
I want you
I'm sorry
I lied
without you I would curl up and die
so curl that tongue then, because not everyone can
open up and say ahhhh
stick out your tongue
because I love a teasing tongue
how does the tongue taste—
sweet?
salty?

the love, the shit, it all just comes rolling off this tongue.

my loose tongue will remind you that with your tongue
you eat, you cheat,
you chew, you screw,
you swallow, you follow,
you taste, you waste,
you talk, you balk,
you zing and you sing.

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my mother tongue is double-edged and gleaming,
truly a flint tongue
with metaphors always ready at the tip of my—
tongue—an acid tongue
a tongue made for kissing,
loving, pleading
a forked tongue
a noble tongue

the blades are sharpened
and ready

the bloody mouth
she, ready to speak.

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MY M

Lorena Duarte

mood.
meditation—
melancholic moment
missing meaning,
missing movement
missing my m:
mercurial
magnetic
marauding
mine.

monumental mistake,
morbid match
made me miserable.

my meekness
made more marble manner
made more marzipan masks

made me:
miss mimic
mastering myopia
mastering mirth
mixed

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miscellaneous
muffled
mournful mutt

made myself mute
made me myth
masochistic madness.

mustn't:
mollycoddle mediocre Mickey Mouse men

mustn't:
make metaphoric monologues

must:
meet my maker magnificent

must:
manufacture manual making Machiavellian men marks

must:
muzzle medieval melodramatic martyrs

must:
mend maimed me

must:
make maverick me merry

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make me, myself:
messy
memorable
mellifluous
marvelous
magical miracle minx

mirror myself
me.

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Daughters of the Land

BARBARA CARRASCO *Artistas por la paz,* 2004

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SPACE, POSITION, AND IMPERIALISM IN SOUTH TEXAS

Dr. Eloisa García Tamez v. U.S. Secretary Michael Chertoff, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Border Patrol, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Margo Tamez (Lipan Apache/Jumano Apache)

This work is part of a longer response and testimony to the United States Periodic Report of April, 2007, on the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racism and Racial Discrimination (CERD). The longer piece, with its supporting documents, was made on behalf of my mother, Dr. Eloisa García Tamez, and elder title holders of the San Pedro de Carricitos Land Grant of 1786 in El Calaboz Ranchería, South Texas, in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The title holders, descendants of both Lhepa Nde' (Lipan Apache) and Euskara (Basque) indigenous peoples, constitute a unique ethnic group of North America who are under direct threat by the United States of America National Security Agency, the U.S. Border Patrol, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This commentary makes clear the visible policies, practices, and systems of racism and racial discrimination perpetrated by the United States against the Lipan Apache and Basque descent land grant title holders and indigenous women defenders of the sacred sites and burial grounds, culturally significant sites, agricultural fields, water rights, oral histories, traditional medicinal plants, and ecological economies related to flora, fauna, and mammalogy.

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Ahi'i'e Ussn biyati. Ahi'i'e Shima' lhepa ndé Ahi'i'e Shita' Ndé
I wrote the response and testimony because I was called upon by the Lipan Apache and Basque Apache descent women land title holders of El Calaboz to relay current-day struggles and the plight of indigenous Lipan Apache people, who are firmly in resistance to further occupation and encroachments by the violent waves of corporatism and militarization in the region of El Calaboz, La Paloma, and El Ranchito of the San Pedro de Carricitos land grant to indigenous people. The recent occupation was implemented as a result of an executive order by President George W. Bush and approved by the U.S. Congress to execute the building of a militarized wall/fence on the levee north of the Mexico–United States international boundary. The levee is located contiguously on Lipan Apache land title holder traditional lands, deeded to them by the King of Spain during the Spanish colonization and occupation of the region. We refuse the terms of the U.S. government and have attempted to negotiate peaceably with this hostile government that negates the rights of indigenous people in our own aboriginal homelands.

El Calaboz Ranchería is one of three culturally and historically significant sites whose community members are Lipan Apache and Basque-Ibero people, whose ancestors resisted Spanish imperial domination in the mid-1700s in what is known as the Lower Rio Grande of North America.[1] This whole region from the coastal plains to the "wild horse plains" of West Texas was the territorial homeland of the Lhepa Nde', the Lipan Apache, and was referred to by neighboring indigenous people to the south as "Ta ma ho lipam"—the place where the Lipan pray. Today, the state of Tamaulipas, a Nahuatl derivative of the Apache place name, signifies the expansive reach of the pre-empire presence of the southern Athabaskan people. El Calaboz Ranchería is located in current-day Cameron County in South Texas, on the northern shores of the Rio Grande, and in the northernmost section of the Nuevo Santander colony,

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established in 1747 by the Spanish king, against the authority of the Lipan Apache people, who did not give their consent to the Spanish occupation of our traditional territories. The indigenous-rooted community, which originally held more than 20,000 acres titled to the Nde' ancestors by the King of Spain, today holds a tiny fraction of the San Pedro de Carricitos traditional indigenous customary parceled lands, or porciones, and is situated fourteen miles to the west of Brownsville, Texas/Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico.

The Mexico-U.S. boundary divides indigenous peoples and mixed-blood indigenous (*mestizos indigenas*) of the original land grant, as well as other descendants of the original inhabitants of these lands. El Calaboz Ranchería (sometimes referred to as "colonia" by local community members) is populated by the direct descendants of Lipan Apache people and the Basque people who intermarried with the Lipan and are their mixed-blood Amerindian descendants, as well as descendants of other indigenous ethnic groups whom the U.S. government categorizes and identifies as Mexican American and Hispanic. Among these Spanish-surnamed groups are communities of dispossessed *indios*, *indigenas*, *pueblos indigenas*, and Native Americans. The community is one of the few places in the United States also composed of direct descendants of Basque colonists, who had themselves undergone persistent persecution by the French and Spanish in their homelands, resisting assimilation and conquest. The Basque were forcibly removed from Basque Santander during revolts of 1661–1685, 1696, 1724, 1726, and 1748 against the French crown.[2] Basque national autonomy on the European continent, as well as in diaspora, is a struggle for self-determination. Institutionally de-indigenized, Lipan Apache and Basque Apache descent peoples of El Calaboz were racialized into a homogenous nationality of "Mexicans," "Mexican Americans," and "Hispanics" from the mid-nineteenth century through the present periods. State-imposed nationalities are well documented in the dispossession of indigenous people

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from their lands and resources and in forced transfer of lands through liberalization, that is, privatization, throughout the hemisphere.

Staging Violence and Crisis

El Calaboz, like its sister rancherías of La Paloma and El Ranchito, is at the nexus of the Spanish *Camino Militar* (military road), established during the Spanish imperial period. During the time of the U.S. Civil War, the road, which cuts through indigenous and mestizo colonias, was overtaken by "military highway"/Highway 281. During the late Texas period (1994–2007), this same road was transferred once again through expansionist and capitalist projects to the "NAFTA" highway.[3]

The NAFTA highway was widened in the last few years. Some El Calaboz community members individually confronted the International Boundary and Water Commission in regard to blatant abuses of their land grant rights. My mother noticed, one evening after returning home, that her back fence had been pushed in several feet toward her house. Her house in El Calaboz is situated on the south side of military highway/NAFTA highway, between the highway and the levee, which is on the riverfront. Her land grant rights extend to the levee, an earthen structure constructed in the 1930s by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which the Corps stated at the time was implemented by the U.S. government to keep floodwaters from the Rio Grande from inundating the local farming communities of El Calaboz, El Ranchito, and La Paloma, among many land grant communities. However, the levee was built without community consultation or consent, according to Basque-descent community elder Lydia Esparza García, a direct descendant of the people placed under the Nuevo Santander land grant of 1743.[4] Community members lost rights to control the usage of the land upon which the levee is situated by de facto eminent domain, instituted without their knowledge, compensation, or political participation.

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The elder García today documents the violent removals of elder grandmothers, daughters, and children in floodwaters that ensued with the "reconstruction" of the levee in the mid 1930s, prior to the State of Texas' establishment of oversight procedures for construction of a levee in rural locations along the Mexico-U.S. border. Consequently, indigenous claims to sacred sites, burial grounds, and agricultural fields were lost. This process occurred without prior knowledge, consent, or authority of the pueblos indigenas of the Lower Rio Grande.

To this day, the levee—where the U.S. Department of Homeland Security wants to build the wall to hold back "illegal immigration"—itself is a source of bitter memory based on traumatic histories of violence between El Calaboz community members and the U.S. Army and the U.S. Border Patrol. Local community members believe they were not adequately informed about the loss of access and rights to their titled lands that would follow the construction of the levee, nor were they given due process or consultation to access legal representation, and they did not give their prior consent to the implied and actual long-term occupation of the levee by U.S. armed personnel to the present—the U.S. Border Patrol. These long-term implications—of increased militarization of the levee itself—had become a controversial issue among riverfront residents, who continue to argue against increased soldiering and militarization of the levee in the U.S. "War on Terror." This pattern of privatization of indigenous lands, militarization and occupation, and forced removals by corporate-led invasions is nothing new to El Calaboz residents.

According to Lydia Esparza García, my grandmother and the mother of Eloisa García Tamez, when the Army Corps of Engineers arrived in the mid-1930s and forced the construction of the levee upon indigenous women, mothers, grandmothers, and children, the Corps never compensated the community for the lives lost in the flooding that occurred due to structural deficiencies, the

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loss of rich farmland sacrificed to the flooding, loss of animals, and ongoing losses of Basque land grant families and the Lipan Apache land grant social networks and ties, which are intrinsically bound up in land, culture, tradition, *and legal title*—to both sides of the river, where these families' titles are held in customary land grant law.[5] The forces of government economic policies benefiting the elites and the negative affects on the impoverished indigenous peoples form a strong thread running through the stories of local El Calaboz residents, who testify to the fact that these forces are bound up in the political economy of the Lipan Apache and Basque indigenous way of life and livelihoods intrinsic to future sovereignty and self-determination.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), U.S. Border Patrol, and the Army Corps of Engineers are pressuring Dr. García Tamez to relinquish her property. As Peter Schey, President of the Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law, notes in his letter to the Secretary of DHS, Michael Chertoff, on behalf of Dr. García Tamez, Tamez is being pressured to sign a

> waiver that does not guarantee her payment for use of Indigenous lands nor for property damages that may occur during the proposed survey and assessment. Further, it does not provide any assurance that the government will relinquish private property or Indigenous lands back to the rightful owners after the surveying has been completed. Nevertheless, a mere resolution of these ambiguities will not in and of itself resolve the multitude of affronts to Indigenous lands and culture that are presented by the proposed wall and accompanying militarization of the border.[6]

Armed personnel, arriving on the elders' doorsteps without prior appointments speaking only in English, tactically present a threat to people who have been

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conditioned to obey the "law and order" of militaristic and masculinist South Texas institutional powers. As Schey indicates, the levee and the land are sites of ongoing historical trauma for El Calaboz residents.

Apaches and Basque Apache People as Multiply Oppressed

Being *both* indigenous *and* associated with Mexico over their long colonial histories as colonized peoples since the sixteenth century, Lipan Apaches have been shackled with dual racisms. By virtue of being indigenous and intrinsically bound up in relations with Mexico and Spain—empires that the United States both races and classes in its past and present construction of the villainous, dark-skinned, non-English-speaking individual/nation as both "foreign" and "enemy"—Lipan Apaches experience *multiple* oppressions. Through colonial relationships locked in oppressive mission and presidio structures, Lipan Apache descent groups have a long, conflict-ridden history of complex social, economic, and political ties to Spain, Catholicism, and Mexico. In fact, Apache history with Spain and Mexico (which extends into the present) goes back further than the length of colonization under Anglo-Saxon, English-speaking Texas and the United States.

Today, Lipan Apache people of South Texas, being marginalized both as indigenous and as prior colonial subjects of Catholic Spain, the Republic of Mexico, and the enslaved Republic of Texas, *experience both overlapping and conflated racisms* embedded in "Indian" identity situated at the peripheries of the United States, Mexico, and empire. At the Mexico–United States international boundary region, "Indian" as a social, economic, and political marker is saturated with persistent colonialistic antagonism, often used to mean "inferior" and "savage" when marking indigenous people, and to evoke "inferior" and "savage" in association with everything and everyone associated with what is stereotypically "Mexico," "Mexican," and of "Spanish"-language

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influence. As a result of dual racisms and systems of oppression, Lipan Apache and Basque Apache descent people are positioned in the center of multiple matrixes and intersections of racial State policies in militarization and corporate empire.

As bi- and trilingual peoples, and assimilation-resistant peoples, Lipan Apache and Basque Apache descent communities, dispersed throughout South Texas and along the international boundary, are people of diaspora. We are a high-risk indigenous ethnic group who face specific threats by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. National Security Agency, and, due to the United States' southern command of the hemisphere, we are threatened by the U.S. involvement in militarization of Mexico's northern states. Thus, the Lipan Apache and Basque Apache descent people who refuse occupation are dangerously positioned under militarization at the peripheries of both the United States and Mexico. Given current climates of xenophobia regarding these indigenous peoples of the Americas, as well as anti-"Mexican illegals" hate-infused policies governing North America, El Calaboz Lipan Apache and Basque Apache descent community members are in a threatened position for their current resistance to the United States National Security Agency and Homeland Security Agency and these agencies' forced occupations of their homelands.

Lipan Apaches and Basque-Ibero-Apache peoples are *still* struggling at the peripheries of U.S. empire against racism and hate-mongering, stereotyping, erasure of their sacred sites, desecration of their burial sites as a result of development projects, occupation, and removal from their ancestral aboriginal sites. At the same time, they are being condemned to toxic environments, violence, and inadequate living conditions, while being subjected to threats *to their very existence* at the heavily militarized Mexico-U.S. militarized zone.

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They are directed by executive presidential orders carried out by Secretary Michael Chertoff, and daily harassed and intimidated by armed personnel of the government, to waive their rights to the crumbs of the lands they've clung to for hundreds of years since the Spanish empire. These threatening actions and elevated stresses to remove Lipan Apache and Basque Apache land grant people are having devastating results on our elders and our future generations. In effect, the Lipan Apache may be conceptualized to be as endangered as the pygmy owl or as an ecological keystone of the social-economic-political indigenous present and future of the region. We implore the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racism and Racial Discrimination to aid us in our struggle against the illegitimate and violent acts of aggression by the United States. Finally, we urge the UN CERD to advocate effectively on our behalf so that we may disrupt and halt the current processes of state violence upon our people and our homelands. We request steadfastly the UN CERD to enable us to practice our unique heritage in our own aboriginal lands and to live uninvaded by State militarization.

I hope this commentary compels readers to action. We are calling upon our indigenous communities and our supporters globally to assist us in foregrounding the issues discussed here, in particular, the heightened threat of armed violence and lethal threats to elder people and women leaders of our ranchería, El Calaboz, which literally means "earthen dug-out prison." It is a name that references the psychological warfare that the Spanish used against our ancestors to contain them in little prison holes within the ground when they resisted oppression and stood firm on dissidence against all power used to destroy a people. We have always been known as resisters to the many empires that forcibly occupied our territories. For more information, see the MALCS blog (http://malcs.net/blog/) for the longer response and testimony.

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Notes

[1] *Ranchería* is a term used by Spanish colonists to refer to indigenous settlements they encountered, which they viewed as peripheral to colonial settlements.

[2] Nuevo Santander originally included the present-day state of Tamaulipas, Mexico. Current-day Texas was formerly within the boundaries of Tamaulipas and Coahila.

[3] In El Calaboz, Highway 281, the old military highway, inundated with heavy trucking traffic is now often referred to by local community members as "the NAFTA road."

[4] Interview with Lydia Esparza García, August, 2007, on file with author.

[5] Lydia Esparza García, in a conversation among family members, August, 2007, Harlingen, Texas.

[6] Peter Schey, letter dated January 7, 2008, to Gus Coldebella, General Counsel Department of Homeland Security. Two letters were drafted for Secretary Michael Chertoff. The first letter did not contain this quoted material, which is included in a memorandum to General Counsel Coldebella.

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INTRODUCING
CALIFORNIA WASN'T GOOD FOR US: A Novel

Reid Gómez

The following story has been excerpted from a longer chapter, "Grandma's Hands," from Reid Gómez' forthcoming novel California Wasn't Good for Us*. In her words, Gómez describes this work as "an urban Navajo story, a tingling maiden story, a story about the violence we turn in on ourselves in response to racism and Catholicism. Madness, alcoholism, greed, and violence destroy the Calabases. This is the story of the one survivor, Cebolla."*

Grandma has a lot of rules, especially about leaving the house without your panties on. Sister would forget. Aunti Lee, Nizhóní, and Johnny would be on the bus with no underwear, just their dresses. I put mine on first, before I put my outside clothes on. I don't know how anyone can forget. But who knows what they did at their house when no one else could see them.

Some things are better left unsaid, and probably this is one of them.

Momi likes to remember all the things she can. Catching the girls without their panties was one. When the girls were small, Momi needed to take care of them for Sister. Her big responsibility, from prom night to Joost Street. It is important to be needed, but not be a slave to it.

After Patsy Cline and Charlie Pride, Momi tells the best stories. After dark, we shut the TV and listen to her music. When she was little, Grandpa would take her to see her Grandma, my Great Grandma with Rocks in Her Pockets. Neither sister wanted to go, only Momi and Grandpa. Grandma would give

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Grandpa a stack of newspapers for Momi to sit on. No dirt allowed with Grandma.

They didn't pay her no mind, left the papers outside and let Momi sit where she wanted. The floor was exactly the same outside and in. Earth, fine as powder. She sits on the floor and watches everyone move around, Grandpa, Uncle Alvin, and her Grandma making fried bread.

In the daylight, they go outside. Grandpa plants and Great Grandma sits on a chair next to the door that faces sunrise. People in the north do not like her. They drive their cars by and point, "look at the Indian."

Great Grandma makes funny faces at the pointers, and Momi makes the same faces when she tells me.

"My Grandma had dirt floors."

She tells me this one lots. I like it, especially in the night, especially after summer's gone and the dark stays long.

Everything grows in darkness, especially Momi's stories. I like to lay in bed beside her. She smokes, and the cigarettes burn slow motion, like in the movies. Some things come all at once, but not stories. They come when they need to.

We go to Grandma's in the morning. She will be waiting for a ride to Tropical, and I will get dropped at Mama Lois's. Momi will go to work, and the week will be over before you know it.

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I do not like to sleep alone. My house with Grandma is different from my house with Momi. Pancakes come to Grandma's. She got a lot of pain, and she don't say nothing about Colorado.

I went there once to visit her brother. Going to Colorado in an airplane is different than driving. We are supervised by Cathy, but already I do not trust her. I have a white suit and a white hat to match. Momi wears a navy dress, cut A-line. Cathy looks dressed normal. Along the way, there's a great deal that could happen. I do not want to lose my Momi. She removes herself already; I notice when we pass South City. Her dress is pretty, but her body leaves it.

Grandma gives us leis she strung herself, to carry for the journey. Everyone thinks we're from Hawai'i, but we're on our way east to family. Someone takes a picture. Momi keeps it in a book to remember that she took me and did not lose me.

I heard their names before but don't know them.

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Grandma stays home. I don't understand why, but don't ask no questions. I'll figure it out while flying. I get to hold on to Momi. It is important not to lose one. It's important not to lose the other. Cathy is excited. This is her father, mother, brother, sisters. They have a giant house with pillars. I think it's very Southern. Momi thinks it's for strangers. Appearances are big doors, and they fold out.

We start in an upstairs bedroom with a sister. I learn new words, like these are second cousins. My Great Aunt explains all the removals in detail. I try to

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remember 'cause I feel like I might get tested later. I don't get it, so it's hard to put it right in memory. I say nothing. It is always preferable to say nothing.

My eyes are wide-open vessels to hold the trip inside. Everything here says not too much emotion. I focus hard on not being retarded. Momi tells me never to act retarded. We sleep, and I am tired. Tomorrow we stay around the house to get adjusted.

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Momi is a stranger here, like me, only worse 'cause she is already older. I am little, so they excuse me. She is crazy, so they hate her. Everything is silence. Wash your clothes at home, don't air dirty laundry.

Momi wears sandals. She hides her toes 'cause they are ugly. But I love to see her feet. Colorado makes her different. She hides herself with the rocks inside Great Grandma's pockets. Grandma's family is nothing at all like Grandpa's. They picked us up but didn't hold us.

Everything has a place here. Me and Momi fit nowhere. We walk around not breaking things. We don't move them either. The stereo has its own room, downstairs in a thing they call the basement. I ask Momi if we can play it. She says we have to ask Cathy. It is important we act right, 'cause all of this will go back to Grandma.

We can't go outside 'cause the snow is much colder than the clothes we brought. Cathy says, "Play the stereo, just don't break it." We put the radio on and search around for Country. There is no food, even though there is a kitchen. We are hungry, but we don't ask for favors. If we are lucky, someone will feed us.

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I am quiet. It is lonelier than St. Teresa's after Father Dennis. Tomorrow we wait for snow to melt, and we stay with another sister. This one is the oldest. I know about her 'cause she got to live with Grandma in San Francisco when she was pregnant. The baby had no father. It's a very serious mistake and a secret, like Cathy and Momi. Nobody can know your business, especially if you're not married. They sent her for the time that she was showing. Then, they took the baby and sent her home again, no one the wiser. That is what Momi tells me. I ask how we're all related, 'cause everything is behind closed doors, just like Charlie Pride. Momi says you can learn everything from music. Listen to the words. They explain you how to feel. Everyone here talks right, so Momi tells me these things in private. We sleep on the sofa bed at the oldest second cousin's. These are Momi's first ones. In the morning we go to Red Rock.

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I have no words, only amazement. Blue frosting goes on forever. Even these cousins know this place is special. I thank to God, but they tell me humans made it. I thank to God again, but this time inside myself, so I don't get corrected. We stay there and eat our sack lunch. Momi looks pretty when the wind blows. Cold ice cuts through and shows what you're made of. She is made of white shell. Her hair cut short for the first time since she was in high school.

I like being so close to clouds and rainbows. Momi's naked feet stand beside me. The kids jump around, and someone takes our picture. You can't hear the city sounds below us. The flashbulb blows, even though the sun is strong enough for the right exposure.

We have to leave before I'm ready. I'd like to sleep here instead of the apartment. It has a pool. I don't care. I can't swim. We have to leave, even if I pretend I can't

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hear them. I wait for them to touch me on the shoulder.

Humans cut this place from mountains. God's eye looks around me. We ride the car and go back to the apartment house they live in.

Soon we visit the Colorado. Momi tells me The Eldest is coming and bringing Christian and Martin. They are staying with Grandma's youngest brother. His wife believes in breast-feeding and the Bible. Their house is flat and not so open. Wooden panels on the walls keep the dark in. Light stays out with outside creatures. We go in once, only to meet them. Momi knows this uncle 'cause he is young, an artist. He looks like Yogi Bear except with fuzzy hair. His wife is small with hair short and straight like Momi's. They will meet us at the mountain top.

The river goes from where we're from to where we moved. I learn geography from listening to Momi and Grandpa. They tell stories. This family doesn't. Information leaks out of rubber tires. No flats. You just got to check the pressure. Keep it right for safety and good mileage. We stop on the road and check them.

They have big cars, and it only takes three of them to cart all of us to the cabins. We pile out and wait for instructions. When The Eldest is here, she bosses everyone, even her uncles. Children in one house, adults in another. I'd rather sleep with Momi.

We get to go to the river as soon as everyone eats their lunch, everything brought in sacks and coolers. We sit at benches, adults on one, children on the other. You know the drill, now follow it. We eat. We do not talk. With The Eldest, there is a time for talking, and it's not when eating.

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Momi hangs her clothes on her shoulders and sits down where she's supposed to. I act adult, but sit with cousins first and second. I send messages to Momi, but she is broken, no reception. I squeeze my energy thin, into threads long enough to reach her. I tell her direct. I am alone, squeezing while I am chewing.

I wish Grandma could be here to fix things. Make The Eldest stop bossing and make Momi feel me squeezing. But Grandma couldn't do it, not even if she was sitting at the children's table with me.

Grandpa is the only one who can make Momi feel better. And he wouldn't be caught dead in fifty yards of them, so I know better than to wish for him. Momi is farther away now than ever.

We throw our garbage into cans. I'm the only girl in a sea of boys, so I get to stay close to Momi. I clean my mess and stand beside her. Her skin is hot, even though she isn't in it. She leaves some things behind so I can find them. We are told to stand and walk, all of us, down to the river.

This water brings Momi back to me immediately. I dip my feet. She dips her hands. Inside the water, you can hear relatives down south, north of Albuquerque. The San Juan crosses us in a soft whisper. Voices travel, connect, and drift off again, like summer, fall, and winter.

The Colorado is shallow and deep in both directions: just north, a change of power; river rock, water, and white foam just south. These are my Grandma's people, here gathering at the juncture.

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You can never predict what you might find. Walk with your mind in all

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directions. Sit to reset the legs. Keep all eyes open. Do not think; pray. Act like the cross can save you. Believe everything. Believe nothing. The generations will make sense of it or it will die in fire. Big thoughts sometimes squish me. I reach out for water to cool the knowledge flowing inward. I like the soft sand water of Great Grandma with Rocks in Her Pockets.

Momi sits on the stones beside me. The rest of them want to see the rapids. I do not want to move from this moment. I am too little. It is too pretty. In a miracle, they trust us to stay together, me and Momi. At the shallow point, we can walk the bank, ankle deep in trickles.

They trust the river. They do not trust my Momi. Even though we can't swim, we float, face up, to heaven. We sit on rocks floating. The Sky God tells me Grandma cannot make the move to San Francisco with my Grandpa. She will hate him as deeply as she loves him. I take it in and do not let it spill out beside me.

They do not know what they know. We belong here. We would never die here. I am happy to be alone with Momi. We sit here all afternoon, listening to the river, the sky, and Grandma. She couldn't bring us. It might shatter the delicate pieces she has left.

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There is no reason for such long distance. You can't understand the journey. You can only make it, by airplane, Chevy, or pony.

Momi's toes are naked. I belong here a little more than she does. It has to do with Grandma. Momi tolerates the distance. She is complete, a girl child of my

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Grandpa. Grandma scrambles her brain like eggs, even though she doesn't need to. Momi is silver when you heat it, no shape held, just nizhóní girl, nizhóní.

Momi believes anything anybody tells her. Especially if they got a book to back them, especially a book with pictures.

She starts saving and buying Avon, and I think it's pretty strange to buy perfume just for the bottles. Hawaiian White Ginger smells the best. It comes in a white frosty bottle. I am smelling it, when I learn you're not supposed to open them. It brings the value down.

I had no idea I was ruining them by smelling them. Now, when the bottles come, I don't touch. I only look.

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Silly Millie has a granddaughter; and they are like me and Grandma, which means that the girl lives with her grandma 'cause something's wrong with her Momi. I don't know what, but it is worse than me, 'cause she never sees her Momi.

She has blond hair, that girl, and is much older. We are going to the San Mateo County Fair. They got lots of rides. We drive the Nova and pick them up on Cortland.

I ride every ride; I am afraid of nothing. Momi takes my picture on one that looks like a dragonfly. This will help her remember later. They have pigs, horses, rabbits, and they even have a cow, but the best thing is the ponies.

I pick one with spots. My Appaloosa. They put us on, and it goes round and

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round. I'm in the wind, on a mountain, going to see my Great Grandma, till the man asks me if I got another ticket. No ticket. No ride.

I get off, and we get ready to go. Sometimes, it takes more time than others. We have a long drive back, and we still have to drop off Silly Millie. I sit in front, even though I'm little. I am still in charge of directions, and her granddaughter doesn't like me. I'm supposed to be a wild monkey, but I don't have it in me. I sit on Momi's lap, and I'm not wild at all. I am a baby. The girl doesn't like little monkeys. She only likes the wild ones.

Momi tries to make us talk about cartoons. I love them. Everything falls at her feet like water balloons. We stand in the muddy space of I don't care; I don't like her.

Silly Millie is pretty funny, so we focus on her, and I don't throw anything else out for the granddaughter.

We drop them off, and Momi tells me about Grandma and her white pony. That's how she met my Grandpa. "He saw her riding on her horse, and he said, 'that's the girl I'm going to marry.'" There is nothing like riding ponies. The dark is a thick blanket. We are under it before I notice. Down Old Bay Shore, to Parisian, then Army. I'm still thinking about my Appaloosa, when Momi parks the car at Grandma's. I sleep here tonight, 'cause country fairs are a special privilege, and so are work friends. Tonight, we had a double, so no complaining about separation.

We're an egg. She's the yolk. I'm the white stuff. Grandma's the shell. She keeps everything from spilling.

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I go upstairs, and Grandma quizzes, Who's the lady? Where'd you go? This is to double-check the information, not for lies. It's hard to tell the difference. Same questions, different feeling. You get into a lot of trouble if you confuse things.

Momi told her the whole story before she left, but Grandma is very suspicious. Momi has big problems getting her stories straight. They always fall down. Especially when there's pressure. Everything causes pressure. It's just a matter of how much.

Tonight is pretty open.

We sleep good, and in the morning, we make fried potatoes, tortillas, eggs, and bacon.

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I go to our room. I like the way the light falls through the window, like one of Grandma's arrangements. She has a rose pin. I look at that. White doilies on the dresser. Mary and Jesus on the wall. He has a crown of thorns made out of holy palms from Palm Sunday. Their eyes are brown. My eyes are brown, too. The light is satin. It reminds me of material from Grandma's sewing. This time alone feels endless.

She comes home. It's almost 4:00. We skip church and sit in the living room, where the air is cool as light. She don't ask me who I been with, and she don't ask me what I been doing. She asks me if I want to watch her embroider. I love that word, today especially more than ever. She is making a flower bouquet, pink, green, brown, light blue, and yellow. The yarn is thick. She makes it with

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her mind and not from marks on cloth. There are none. She shows me running stitch, knot balls, and backstitch. Last week, she showed me blanket stitch, and this week I get to practice.

Backstitch is the easiest. I like the mismatched stitch that gives the flowers feeling. I don't remember how you call it. It looks like scratch marks made by chickens, except it's really complicated. If you don't take your time, it looks too planned out to be in nature. We take our time, sewing all night with the light on. On my practice cloth, I have two knots, a row of small stitch, a row of long stitch, one X—'cause I was beginning to get ahead of myself—and the blanket stitch around the edge in yellow. Next week, I get to pick my own project, a pillow made of yellow satin and green stretchy cloth. Two types of materials make it harder. This is sewing by hand, not machine. Learn this first. Learn that later.

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It's almost midnight when we hear Uncle. We shut the light and sneak off quick to the bedroom. I jump in bed and pretend I'm sleeping. I almost forget I'm already in my PJs. I panic, remember, then get still again. Grandma slides in with her clothes on. You are never allowed to lay in bed with your street clothes. Something must be wrong with her. It's dark till he finally gets the door open, up the stairs, into the kitchen for food, then he turns on the TV. The light makes fire in the hallway.

Hiding is easier than avoiding. In the morning, we will check his room and clean him. He'll be different. We won't need to disappear ourselves. I fall asleep not thinking about the morning. My embroidery is on the floor next to me. I want to sleep with it, but I don't want to stick myself. I dream of nothing. The

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sun reaches through the window and wakes me. I am alone in bed without Grandma. She's already in the kitchen, drinking tea, and heating rags.

We never wash the house, but we always wash Uncle. He's swollen and stinks. He got beat up bad, and then he wet himself. Hot towels. Grandma believes in boiling water. She keeps Icy Hot in the door of the refrigerator. She tells me to bring it to his room so I can help her. He is naked except for the white sheet across his privates. There are bruises and marks everywhere not covered. We are quiet. He mumbles. She takes a scoop of Icy Hot and puts it on his leg, which aches him. He is crying. She says for me to do the other one. The Icy Hot feels like freezer pops before you freeze them.

It's dark, except for the light in the hallway. On days like this, she covers up his windows. We rub both legs, and Grandma helps him roll to his side, then flip over. She carefully places the sheet again to cover his privates. We rub his back and between his shoulders. There is a giant mark across his back, and he muffles words into the pillow. It smells good 'cause of all the medicine. We leave him alone, and then she brings him a bowl of liquid. He drinks like a dog. His head is too heavy for his neck; someone choked him. I can see their fingers.

The house is extra quiet, like it knows he is broke. We don't make noise. We go out. Walk to the top of the hill and back. Dave gives Grandma something to take care of Uncle, like always. We get home, and he is still laying there, but without his sheet on. She covers him and gives him the thing we got at Dave's. We get our clothes ready for the morning. Practice sewing will have to wait till next week. We read from the brown book.

When he needs her, he calls out, "Ma." She goes in fast but smooth. He usually don't get beat much because he is stronger than all of them. This is the second

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time this month, and it scares Grandma so much, she swallows more than ever.

At night, he wakes up and goes to eat hard food and watch TV. He falls asleep on the chairs, like always. He stays broke for a week, and then he cuts his hair off. Grandma don't ask questions. Some things are better if you don't know them. He don't say nothing, not even to me, who he says he can tell anything.

/ / /

We don't see much of him for a long while after. I don't ask for favors, so I don't owe none. I take care not to get in trouble. I'm alone. No adult supervision. During the days, I entertain myself. Especially on the weekends. Grandma works overtime, and Momi is busy working on Grandma's Brother's house so we can live there. He's got two houses and says we can stay in one if we fix it. I'm not allowed to help with housework. Momi goes down there and works till dark. She says a house is better than an apartment. But I like living next door to Jesus.

I don't get a say. Not with Cathy. Children should be seen, not heard, and that's why her and Momi fight in private.

I'm not allowed to be alone on Naples. Jesus don't stay home. He's always leaving. And I didn't keep my word about not going to the street to look for Momi. Once you break your word, you gotta earn it back, no giving. It's harder 'cause of doubt. Once you give doubt, there's no taking it back. So you gotta do a lot to earn some trust, even if it's a little.

So I entertain myself at Grandma's. Momi built me a playhouse, out the window in the TV room, on top of Grandpa's. The window is behind the red couch. So I slip back there and climb through the window to my playhouse

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with the roof that opens to the sky. She put in indoor/outdoor carpet and made throw pillows from scraps and stuffing. In the corner is a stack of cardboard boxes. Mrs. Beasley lives there while we play.

I got lots of stories, so I don't mind being there all day.

The playhouse is only good for summer. No roof makes it easy for the rain to come in and soak me. I sit there 'cause it's quiet. I like the view. Grandpa is building a work shed and making a lemon lime tree from parts. There is no wall to the yard, only a double railing of two-by-fours. One is sawed in half. Grandpa climbed up there once 'cause Grandma locked the garage door, and he said he needed to talk to her.

He climbed up there with his saw and started sawing. He cut the board, threw it down, and pulled himself through the open space. It's big enough to fall through.

I don't know why he didn't climb next door, jump the roof, and then hop over. You slip down the back porch and kick the door in. Uncle showed me.

Grandpa pressed his face against the window. It was raining, so he looked like the wicked witch, melting. He just kept staring. Even he knows better than to break the glass, so he just knelt there, tapping. Grandma ignored him and swallowed. The rain and tapping made it so we couldn't hear what he was saying. The mouth just kept on moving. Grandma turned the TV up and swallowed. No light except the program. We went to sleep, and in the morning, he was gone. Grandma didn't mention it again. Momi took the saw and built the playhouse.

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Uncle said that was stupid. Anyone can get in the house if they want to. Grandma is still working, so I gotta stay here, listening to Uncle. He says the back door is the easiest, and then the window by the kitchen; if that isn't open, you can always get the lock off the side door. Besides, Grandma never locks it. He knows all the ways in and all the ways out; stick with him, and he'll protect me.

You can't shut him out, don't even try. He goes where he wants. I gotta learn; stick with him, he'll teach me. This is what he tells me.

Still three more hours till someone comes to get me. I'm stuck. Uncle talks so much, I think he'll run out of things to show me. You can't exhaust him. Just throw yourself in and hope that you'll float face up. Never underestimate the current.

He's going out with the Uncle White Boy. They got things to do, when I hear the door shut.

Momi's home, early.

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Book Reviews

BARBARA CARRASCO *Antonia*, 2005

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¿QUÉ ONDA?

Angharad N. Valdivia

¿Qué Onda? Urban Youth Culture and Border Identity. *By Cynthia L. Bejarano. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005. 248 pages. $21.95 (paper).*

¿Qué Onda? *Urban Youth Culture and Border Identity* treads the familiar ground of youth cultures in the Southwest—in an urban high school that the author calls Altamira High—where the shifting demographics of the formerly privileged and mostly white school have forced the administration and students alike to deal with a changing situation. What seems homogeneous to outsiders—that is, "Hispanics"—is anything but to the students within this group. Cynthia Bejarano employs ethnographic methodologies to explore the tensions among Latina/os at the border. She argues for taking into account the border experience as both a material reality and a symbolic set of circumstances that position youth in a very difficult situation that fosters divisions and hostilities rather than unity and solidarity. It is a sad tale that reminds me of *Con Respeto* (Valdés 1996), another elegant ethnography of education at the border that discusses Mexican parental involvement in their children's education, which is almost completely at odds with hegemonic expectations of both parental involvement and student participation.

From the outset, Bejarano acquaints us with the two dominant groups within Latinidad at this particular high school: the Mexicana/os and the Chicana/os. The former are mostly recent immigrants whose language and class binds them together. The latter are often, though not always, second-generation or later Mexican Americans whose facility with English and mostly legal status

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puts them at a superior position in relation to newly arrived and often quasi-legal Mexicana/os. As Gloria Anzaldúa has written—and indeed, Bejarano makes extensive use of her work—the struggle to belong and to gain a foothold north of the border via citizenship pits recent and older immigrants against each other. The Latina/o youth groups create and assert their identity in relation to prevailing discourses of power that discriminate against the immigrant and privilege the Anglos.

Bejarano invests four years in Altamira High School getting to know Mexicana/os and Chicana/os. She makes a methodological decision to focus on girls for a number of reasons. First, Bejarano appeared young enough to be asked out on dates by the young men in the groups she studied. Clearly that was a problem. Second, the girls were more open to discussion than the boys. Third, the girls appeared to mistrust her reasons for talking to boys, and thus talking only to the girls aided her study. Bejarano found that Mexican girls were more open than the Chicanas, partly because the latter had more experience mistrusting school authorities and their motives. Fortunately for us, Bejarano had a four-year period to sort out these issues, and her efforts have yielded a rich text that is bound to energize border, Latina/o, and youth studies.

Bejarano asserts that the main fault line of difference remains language as Mexicana/os and Chicana/os mutually police each other. Chicana/os who speak Spanish feel shame that they cannot properly write it or even speak it. Mexicans are there to point out their deficiencies in a language in which they have not been schooled. Some Chicanos speak no Spanish, and both their families and fellow students ridicule them for it, using terms such as *Whitsicans* and *Chicanquis*. Many Chicanos, despite their English proficiency, retain an accent, which sets them apart from non-Chicana/o, native English

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speakers. In turn, even when they speak and understand Spanish, most Chicanas/os do not go out of their way to help, or they outright reject, Spanish-speaking Mexican immigrants. Mexicans, on the other hand, can speak only to each other, most freely in ESL classes or during lunch hour in their socially segregated spaces. The fact that they do not speak English means they do not have access to most school activities and resources, as these are conducted or circulated mostly in English by English-speaking faculty and students. Thus, there is a hierarchy according to language, with Anglo English speakers at the top, Chicana/os in the middle, and Mexicana/os at the bottom.

Piggybacking onto language and belonging as major vectors of difference, Latina/o youth develop a "style" that further exacerbates divisions between Mexicana/os and Chicana/os. In addition to enduring parentally reinforced gender regulations, most Mexicanas also hold on to all that is Mexican, as that is what grounds them and links them to each other. In this process, the wide diversity within Mexicanidad fades into the background in favor of a homogenous national identity that may or may not represent the young Mexicanas' experiences in Mexico. Chicanas, on the other hand, whether through hairstyle, media and musical choices, clothing, or body piercings and tattoos, make more choices that tend to be coded as Anglicized even though, ironically enough, many of the Mexican youth came from far more cosmopolitan areas, such as Mexico City, where such practices may have been more generalized. Bejarano insightfully notes that despite their subordinate position, Mexicanas are more grounded in their identity than the ambivalent and hybrid Chicanas. It seems that both cultures are far more comfortable with pure and unitary approaches to identity than with creative mixtures of cultures.

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As a result of all these differences, there are deep divisions and hostilities between these two groups. Mexicanas often express bafflement at the Chicanas' attitude toward them given that Chicanas' parents endured precisely the same vilification now being heaped upon Mexicanas by fellow Chicana students. Some of the girls from both groups also acknowledge that they are all discriminated against as a homogeneous Latina/o threat in dominant Anglo culture. School officials are largely ignorant of these intragroup dynamics, assigning Latina/o faculty and staff to deal with any issues that may arise, and thus continuing to treat systemic structural issues of inequalities as purely "Latina/o issues." Even the establishment of a MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) after-school chapter, intended to bridge the gap between these two groups, served to reinforce the division further, as English-speaking Chicana/os use the association as yet another location to assert their superiority over the Spanish-speaking Mexicans.

Bejarano's study documents the need to understand the heterogeneity within Latinidad. School officials must further understand the tensions that their dismissive and homogenizing practices are causing among youth. Teachers and counselors must take into account the extreme stress endured by Mexican youth whose citizenship status may be questioned at any time. The creative ways that youth hybridize need to be valorized. The ways that schools continue to track youth into ethnic- and class-specific educational paths has to be checked. This is a matter of social justice for which we have extensive research dating back decades (see, for example, Foley 1990). Thus, there are plenty of applications for educators to be gleaned from this book.

The book's drawback is its constant, indeed almost self-defeating, insistence on literature review. This leads to repetition and interferes with the flow. One wishes that the author had limited her review to the first two chapters and

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had allowed for the youth voices to come out more. After all, four years of ethnographic work must have generated massive amounts of interviews and field notes. I feel we barely get a glimpse of these elements. Also, there is too much self-reflexivity regarding the "native ethnographer." The fact is, as *fronteriza* as the author might be, she is an academic ethnographer whose work will both contribute to a much-needed literature and help her career. Given that the book seeks to reach out to a broader constituency than reflexive ethnographers, the frequent self-reflexive passages are a stumbling block in terms of flow and readability. These two issues, however, are not significant enough to prevent us from reading an excellent ethnography about Mexicana and Chicana youth at the border. The nuanced results of Bejarano's work should inform scholars and practitioners across a broad range of disciplines and professions. I have already begun to incorporate chapters into my undergraduate classes and to assign the entire book in doctoral seminars on identity, gender, and Latina/o studies. I encourage readers to do the same.

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THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED: The Erotic Journeys of Mexican Immigrants

Aída Hurtado and Janelle M. Silva

Erotic Journeys: Mexican Immigrants and Their Sex Lives. *By Gloria González-López. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. 331 pages. $21.95 (paper).*

In *Erotic Journeys: Mexican Immigrants and Their Sex Lives*, Gloria González-López invites the reader to join her on a walk down the road less traveled as she examines the sexual journeys of twenty heterosexual men and forty heterosexual women, most from working-class backgrounds, as they migrate from Mexico to the United States. The book is based on ethnographic field notes and in-depth interviews with participants who were born and raised either in the urban setting of Mexico City or in the rural areas of the state of Jalisco. At the time of the study, all participants were residing in the greater Los Angeles area in the United States. Through her conversations with these men and women, González-López allows the reader to go beyond the bedsheets to understand the transformative influences on sexuality as individuals leave their native country and become integrated into a dramatically different social environment.

Each of the eight chapters in the book highlights a different aspect of the changes the travelers' sex lives undergo because of the migration process. In chapter one, "Twice Forgotten: The Sex Lives of Heterosexual Mexicans in the United States," González-López frames the participants' journey within the emerging research in cultural studies, immigration studies, and gender and sexuality studies. Her theoretical positioning is further highlighted in

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chapter two, "Beyond the Hymen: Women, Virginity, and Sex." González-López theorizes the important role of virginity from the perspective of the immigrants. She proposes that the concept of virginity for Mexican women is more complicated than the simplistic "virgin/whore" dichotomy that has been promoted by the Catholic Church. Instead, the importance of preserving a woman's virginity prior to marriage is socially valued as a pathway to improving women's status within Mexican society. The author introduces the concept of *capital femenino*, which refers to the participants' use of virginity as a form of social, economic, and cultural exchange. Capital femenino, for example, is used to obtain a suitable husband who will insure a woman's participation in the proper social and cultural communities and improve her economic opportunities. At the same time, the preservation of virginity is a manifestation of cultural beliefs and an enactment of ethnicity: virginity signifies respect for one's family and culture. Congruently for men, women's chastity until marriage allows them to express the Mexican tenets of manhood. Within these restrictions, however, women acknowledge their sexual desires and take an active role in seeking sexual gratification. This chapter lays the foundation for the essence of the immigrants' erotic journeys: a set of contradictions among transnational identities, gender inequality, patriarchy, sexual agency, and the social construction of virginity within Mexican culture.

The remaining chapters mark the beginning of the immigrants' erotic journeys as the reader is invited to observe the changes that happen behind closed doors. In chapter three, "Pleasurable Dangers, Dangerous Pleasures: Men and Their First Sexual Experience," González-López details the sexual initiations that the men undergo in order to become "hombres." Commonly, in rural areas, older male family members pay for sex workers to introduce younger males to their first sexual experiences. In contrast, in large urban

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areas, young men have access to older, sexually experienced women who become the men's sexual initiators. Men's loss of virginity is often coupled with feelings of fear and anxiety because they are not explicitly taught about sex, and their sexual initiators are typically strangers with whom they do not have a meaningful relationship.

The *testimonios* of the men and women interviewed elucidate how education, migration, and social location construct the enactment of premarital virginity. As the participants reveal their own erotic journeys, they share a common path of fear during their first sexual experience. For example, while men are explicitly initiated sexually, women's virginity is highly policed. Men are taught that to enter manhood they must have sex; women are told that their virginity is directly tied to the family's honor. These social rules shape how men and women embark on their distinct sexual journeys.

Chapter four, "Sex is a Family Affair: Nurturing and Regulating Sexuality," addresses the central regulatory role that families, especially mothers, play in reinforcing cultural standards regarding virginity, femininity, masculinity, and sexuality. The loss of virginity becomes a public act for women through the marriage ceremony, as it is directly tied to family respectability and the social importance of being a so-called virtuous woman.

In chapters five through eight, the author illustrates the particular aspects of the immigrants' sexual lives that have been changed as a result of the migration process. Chapter five, "Sex and the Immigrant Communities: Risky Opportunities, Opportune Risks," delineates the inherent risks in the participants' sexual journeys as they are exposed to drugs, violence, alcohol, and the fear of contracting HIV/AIDS. In chapter six, "Sexual Discourses and Cultures in the Barrio: Networking," the focus on the

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family of origin's influence over female sexuality begins to shift to the participants' conversations and relationships with other women in immigrant communities. The networking taking place in informal gatherings becomes a resource for women as they begin to question their restricted sexual socialization and start to explore their own sexual desires. This leads into chapter seven, "Sexual Bargains: Work, Money, and Power," which explores the transformation that women and men undergo in their changing views of sexuality created within their new communities. The participants' journeys to the United States allow them to forge their own sexual paths unrestricted by immediate family and community of origin. Immigrants are able to have greater sexual agency, while at the same time, they confront societal dangers such as drugs and violence.

In the final chapter, "Gendered Tapestries: Sexuality Threads of Migrant Sexualities," González-López pauses to reflect on how sexuality and virginity are being contextualized for new generations and to raise some implications for future research. Overall, González-López provides an intersectional analysis to the erotic journeys of the participants, illustrating the dynamics of social context, identity, race, culture, ethnicity, gender, religion, family, and migration. She is in dialogue with other Chicana and Latina scholars who are seeking to explore the complicated paths of sexuality that are being transformed by changing transnational identities.

This book is appropriate for use in undergraduate or graduate courses in Chicana/o and Latina/Latino studies, Latin American studies, gender studies, feminist studies, American studies, cultural psychology, and sociology. A central tenet of the book is that we must move beyond the bedroom to explore sexuality as a contextual phenomenon that is changed as individuals cross borders within communities, families, and nations.

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Erotic Journeys: Mexican Immigrants and Their Sex Lives makes many excellent contributions to the scholarly studies of sexuality and immigration. Among the most important are the recognition of the internal diversity of Mexican culture (captured in González-López's concept of regional patriarchies), her description of the fluidity of Mexican culture and social practices as participants confront new and complex environments, and, ultimately, the acknowledgment that immigrants are much more than bodies moved by global capital. As human beings, they too desire, feel, and have passions that go beyond the economic restrictions of their lives.

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BARBARA CARRASCO received an MFA in art from the California Institute of the Arts and a BFA from UCLA. Her work ranges from miniature drawings to monumental murals. A key figure in the Chicano Arts Movement, Carrasco has been socially and politically engaged throughout her career as an artist-activist, working closely with community and movement leaders, including Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, and organizations for social change, such as the United Farm Workers (UFW) union and the Dolores Huerta Foundation. Carrasco's work has been exhibited throughout the US, Europe, and Latin America. She is the recipient of several grants, including the Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department Window Grant for Literature (1990); LACE, Rockefeller Foundation, Andy Warhol Foundation, and NEA (1992); J. Paul Getty Fund for the Visual Arts, Visual Artist Fellowship/Painting (1988); and the COLA award from the Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department (2000). Carrasco's original mural sketches and drawings are housed in the Permanent Collection of Works on Paper at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC, and a permanent collection of her papers has been established and archived at Stanford University Special Collections Mexican American Manuscript Collections. Among her most recent accomplishments are: a solo exhibition of her work, *A Brush With Life: Mid-Career Survey Exhibition*, at the Vincent Price Art Museum, East Los Angeles College (February 9 – May 1, 2008); and collaboration with the Girl Scouts of America in the creation of a new merit badge for leadership that features Carrasco's image of Dolores Huerta. Carrasco's work appears with permission on the front cover and in the section breaks of this issue. *Pregnant Woman in a Ball of Yarn* is available as a limited edition print at the Patricia Correia Gallery.

CARMELITA "ROSIE" CASTAÑEDA, assistant professor in the Department of Educational Studies in the College of Education at the University of Wyoming, explores in her research culturally responsive instructional and curricular practices, investigates how multiple forms of oppression impact

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educators' experiences, and documents experiences of teachers of color in diasporic settings. She can be reached at carmelit@uwyo.edu.

NATALIA CRESPO was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1976. She received her PhD in Spanish literature in 2007 from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and is currently working as visiting assistant professor at Michigan Technological University. She has published several short stories and poems in international journals and has garnered literary awards including Premio Veinte Jóvenes Cuentistas del Cono Sur (Colihue, 1996), Premio Ajiaco (Arkansas Technological University, 2003), and honorable mention in the fourth Paul Borgeson Poetry Recital and Competition (University of Illinois, 2004). The poem published here, "Romper el silencio," was awarded second prize in the seventh Paul Borgeson Poetry Recital and Competition in April, 2007.

MARIVEL T. DANIELSON is an assistant professor of literature and cultural studies in the Department of Transborder Chicana/o Latina/o Studies at Arizona State University. She received her PhD from the University of Michigan. Her research interests include theater and performance studies, queer Latina cultural expression, and border/diaspora studies. She is currently finishing a manuscript on queer Latina identity and desire in literature and performance for Rutgers University Press.

KAREN MARY DAVALOS, associate professor in Chicana/o Studies, recently co-authored a revision of the undergraduate core curriculum at Loyola Marymount University (LMU). This work allowed her to explore best-practices in higher education, refine the art of collaboration, and develop leadership skills. In the effort to deepen the social transformations at LMU, she invited Edén Torres (University of Minnesota) to speak about racism in the classroom. At the time of printing, three of Karen Mary's Chicana students have been accepted into graduate programs at top research institutions, including USC, Stanford, University of Chicago, and the University of California, Santa Cruz.

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LORENA DUARTE was born in El Salvador and raised in Minnesota. She holds a degree in Hispanic studies/romance languages and literature from Harvard University. In 2005, she was named one of the top twenty-five young Latino leaders in Minnesota by the Minnesota Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. She performs regularly with Palabristas/Latin@ Wordslingers, a Minnesota-based Latino poetry collective, and she coedited *Outside the Lines* (2007), Palabristas' first collection. She contributed to and coedited *Under What Bandera? Anti-War Ofrendas from Minnesota y Califas* (Calaca Press, 2004). She is also featured in *Telling Tongues*, an anthology published by Calaca Press and Red Salmon Press (Austin, 2007). In February, 2007, she represented Minnesota at the Individual World Poetry Slam in Vancouver, and in August, she was part of SlamMN's team at the National Poetry Slam in Austin, Texas. In September, she became a board member of The Loft, the nation's largest literary organization.

REID GOMEZ is a Navajo writer and independent scholar. "I focus my work on language, sovereignty, and class. My stories detail the memories and migrations we, the tribal, the detribalized, and the descendants of slaves, make and the relationships we forge in light of those migrations. I can be reached at reidgomez@yahoo.com."

AÍDA HURTADO, professor of psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, is interested in the study of social identity, Latino educational issues, and feminist theory. Her publications include *The Color of Privilege: Three Blasphemies on Race and Feminism* (University of Michigan Press, 1996); *Voicing Feminisms: Young Chicanas Speak Out on Sexuality and Identity* (New York University Press, 2003, honorable mention for the 2003 Myers Outstanding Book Awards); *Chicana Feminisms: A Critical Reader* (coedited with Gabriela Arredondo, Norma Klahn, Olga Nájera-Ramírez, and Patricia Zavella, Duke University Press, 2003). Her latest book is *Chicana/o Identity in a Changing U.S. Society. ¿Quién soy? ¿Quiénes somos?* (coauthored with

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Patricia Gurin, University of Arizona Press, 2004). In 2007, she received the Distinguished Contributions to Gender Equity Award from the American Educational Research Association.

TIFFANY ANA LÓPEZ, associate professor at the University of California at Riverside, teaches courses on Latina/o literature and cultural studies. She is the first Chicana hire in the English department where, for over the past decade, she has developed new courses in Latina/o literature. Among her accomplishments, she counts having chaired MA and PhD exams for over ten Latina/o graduate students, directed four Latina/o PhDs into tenure-track faculty positions, and ushered well over two-dozen undergraduates into advanced degree programs. Her service work includes: founding President of the Latina/o Literature and Culture Society of the American Literature Association; active faculty member willing to lobby, fight and compromise (she is proud to have six colleagues of color in her department); Director of Graduate Admissions for her department; planning faculty member for a proposed joint PhD in Children's Literature between the California State University and the University of California; and annual faculty participant in the Mentoring Summer Research Institute Program (MSRIP).

JANELLE M. SILVA is a doctoral candidate in social psychology/feminist studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She received her BA in psychology and the history of art and visual culture, as well as her MA in social psychology, from UC Santa Cruz. Her research focuses on the construction of children's stigmatized social identities in the media, popular culture, and school.

MARGO TAMEZ (Lipan Apache and Jumano Apache) is the daughter of Eloisa Garcia Tamez. She is the author of *Alleys & Allies* (Saddle Tramp Press, 1991), *Naked Wanting* (University of Arizona Press, 2003), and *Raven Eye* (University of Arizona Press, 2007). Her research focuses on bi-national indigenous women who are aboriginal to communities on and dissected by the Mexico-U.S. International Boundary and their resistances against

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militarization, colonization, and genocide. For more information about her and the struggle of Lipan Apache women of El Calaboz *rancheria* (*pueblo indigena*), see http://www.nativewiki.org/Margo_Tamez; http://bsnorrell.blogspot.com/search?q=lipan+apache.

ANGHARAD N. VALDIVIA is a Research Professor at the Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois with faculty appointments in Media Studies, Gender and Women's Studies, and Latina/o Studies. Her teaching and research focus on issues of transnationalism, gender, ethnicity, media studies, and popular culture. She has written extensively on issues of gender and popular culture with a current emphasis on Latina Media Studies. Her books include *A Latina in the Land of Hollywood* (University of Arizona Press, 2000), *The Media Studies Companion* (Blackwell, 2003), and *Latina/o Communication Studies Today* (Peter Lang Publishers, 2008). She is currently on sabbatical in Madrid, Spain.

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While primarily an academic journal, we encourage submissions written in a style accessible to a broad audience. We urge contributors to be sensitive to the social implications of language and to seek wording free of discriminatory overtones.

Instructions for authors are available on our Web site (see below). Briefly, authors should prepare their manuscripts according to the Chicago Manual of Style author-date system and should submit four paper copies of the manuscript and an abstract of not more than 175 words to the appropriate address below. The journal has no manuscript page minimum or maximum, but prefers scholarly articles of 5,000 words or 25 pages (not including tables, notes, or references); commentary articles of 2,500 words or less; and review articles between 700 and 1,000 words. Creative writers may submit no more than six poems or two fiction or testimonio pieces (maximum of ten pages each). Creative works may be written in Spanish, English, Spanglish, or any combination of languages generated by the diaspora and/or colonization processes (i.e., Quechua and Spanish, Nahuatl and English). With prior communication, the coeditors will accept electronic submissions from authors living outside the United States. Manuscripts will not be returned. Contributors are encouraged to join MALCS.

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