

Alienated from her mother culture, alien in the dominant culture, the woman of color does not feel safe within the inner life of her Self. Petrified, she can't respond, her face caught between los intersticios, the spaces between the different worlds she inhabits.

—Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*

We cut our teeth in anger.

—Audre Lorde, “*The Use of Anger: Women Responding to Racism*”

CONJUGATIONS: The Insurrection of Subjugated Knowledges and Exclusionary Practices

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The text that follows is an abbreviated memoir of my collision course with the University of California, Berkeley (UCB), the Department of Ethnic Studies (ES), and other departments. I have been, to say the least, an idealist Chican@ feminist who happened to be the only one in the whole institution for the first decade of my tenure there. Being the only one may not be healthy, especially for a beginner in the academy, because it invisibly begins to isolate one when sympathetic and understanding mentors to lend support do not exist in the institution.

Indeed, I question whether feminism can be defined without saying that it harbors an idealist political philosophy that calls for a thorough transformation of our society, that seeks to deconstruct and reconstruct the

world so that it is habitable for girls, women, and our queer futurity—to cite part of the title of José Muñoz’s book. I have found that my feminist idealism will not yield to pragmatism because it feels like giving up on the future we want to have and in which we want to live. Thus, to Freud’s confusion on what do women want, I would say we want to dismantle a racist and misogynist heteronormative patriarchy that sucks the life out of women and some men from birth. The demands of my Chican@ feminist idealism are in a constant struggle with pragmatism.

For this brief memoir I selected some recollections of what I deemed to be key situations and incidents of cumulative frustrations, tensions, and contradictions which reveal the violence of the daily grind that queer and feminist women of color may endure in the context of a hegemonic white heteronormative patriarchal research institution. I was a participant-observer of my own work-life and I gather here some aspects of the structural logic and players of the atmosphere into which I was thrown. In providing an assessment of situations and incidents experienced, I make commentaries and may supply interpretations that spatiotemporal distance allows. What I did not fully recognize at the time was that I was actually working against the grain of the institution; in fact, in the end, I did recognize it, however it was too late to do me any good. The major question for me, then, becomes what is the good to understand and know, a priori, one is a personification of working against the grain. How does understanding and knowing help anyone of us to protect ourselves from the cumulative violent effects of the daily grind so as to prevent our own exhaustion and collapse?

The Domestication of the Insurrection of Subjugated Knowledges

I came of age in the tumultuous 1960s and early 1970s. I was deeply influenced by the multitudinous activities and rhetorics of those times. These

included queer and feminist women of color in the United States as well as non-hegemonic feminists of color all over the world. Moreover, there was a spectacular array of ethno-race movements, anti-colonialist movements in the third world, hegemonic white feminisms, and hegemonic white-male left antiwar movements. The latter two mostly came from the Anglo American middle-classes. In brief, a historical and sociopolitical consciousness awakened. At the time I perceived this potential sociopolitical collectivity as sectors and fragments of the Anglo American nation-state, some of which were in solidarity with planetary anticolonial movements, and all of which would in time interconnect and form alliances and maybe even create some coherence because they were all written on pages of dissent from, and revolt against, the ruling classes. Or thus it was the way I read so at the time! I was in error, of course, to read them in this manner, for I had not entered into my reading the calculus that each sector had a different frame of intelligibility—which to our day has not been overcome, or so it seems to me. In a sense, even today, I hope for a frame of intelligibility that can give form to a sociopolitical collectivity that together could transform our current state of affairs.

Dreamers have a hard time dying, as dreamers anyway.

Clearly, this was an idealistic perception, perhaps enabled by my immigrant status and relative isolation in Bloomington, Indiana, where these radicals sometimes stopped by to visit on their way from west to east or vice versa. Our own activist and rhetorical hub was small in comparison and went largely unnoticed, though not without some local accomplishments. I have come to think that this relative isolation nurtured an idealistic euphoria that carried me into the halls of academe, and, in time and almost overnight, I was demographically transferred from being a woman with unskilled working-class roots of Mexican descent to a woman of Mexican descent in the pigeon hole identification of middle-class, as my income increased from that of an

answering-service telephone operator (remember Lily Tomlin). I was the first in my family, and even among acquaintances, to go to college.

The dust in my huaraches would not be so easily wiped out, however, just because of a raise in wages. One remains a commodity on a different level—exchange value level. One may leave the cadres of surplus/use labor for the cadres of unrepresentable exchange value labor in the white academy that ends up as a footnote that serves the needs of the preferably white and/or assimilated expert. In fact, I had first found out about us of Mexican descent in the library catalogue at Indiana University in the late 1960s. We existed in print in the bib and I ask myself, *Are we headed in a similar direction today, albeit, digitalized?* After all, it is the more high-class commoditized and assimilated experts that get to speak their expertise in the academy or to the viewing public on corporate media.

When I arrived at the University of California, Berkeley, in the fall of 1987, to undertake my new job in the Department of Ethnic/Chican@ Studies, I was terribly excited by the prospect of working at a university, which had undergone a student insurrection that had managed to establish a department in the flagship campus of the University of California system. I believed that we were part, along with many third world others, of what Foucault had referred to as “The insurrection of subjugated knowledges.”¹ In fact, in my job talk on Chican@ literature for the department, I had foregrounded that statement and further suggested that that statement referred to all of us across all disciplines in the department who were affecting a transformation in the production of knowledge that would reach all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. After all, these disciplines were being challenged in the Chican@ print culture of 1960s–1980s. Hardly! What was actually afoot in these divisions was a process of liberal subsumption a la capitalist methodologies of domestication, as well as a dematerialized appropriation,

when suitable to dominant paradigms of the local sense of legitimized theory and scientificity. Though we did change as a people in general, what stayed the same was the elite ruling structure of the academy and its (neo)liberal adept and subtle practices of exclusion, albeit, with tokens of domesticated inclusion! The university may well have imagined that insofar as they had responded to the students' insurrection over the exclusionary practices of access to the academy, as a progressive institution, they had done their duty and had complied with a long-neglected moral obligation. That is, the days of the white man's burden were over.

As if that was not enough, I was hired to teach Chican@ literature in a department fully dominated by patriarchal social scientists and historians for whom literature was a secondary or even tertiary (after education) player in what I mistakenly had taken for an insurrection. That is to say, that literature did not carry much value. The insurrection was dead, a death enforced by the white academy's maneuvering of rules, protocols, and policy. And, as my medical doctor said to me ten years after a critical comment I made about the university, "Be careful what you say, you know those men in suits." He did not mention those women in fashionable suits. By this time, however, this same doctor had concocted, with the approval of his consulting psychiatrist, a cocktail of psychotropics so that I could keep working with all of those suits! But, I am getting ahead of the story.

Cumulative Double Binds and Piquetitos

At first, I was a bit anxious because I had been a second-choice hire in the Chicano Studies program of the Department of Ethnic Studies, which housed us, Native Americans, and Asian Americans. I quickly put this concern behind me since I was quite happy to get out of the Midwest and could now avoid an unsavory career path in an intolerable Spanish department

whose *burguesismo*, strict monolingualism in the curriculum, and was largely dominated by Anglo Americans. My Chican@ Studies expertise had been developed through a praxis of formulating literary courses in the newly founded program of Chicano-Riqueño Studies by my wonderful graduate school mentor Luis Dávila, a Chicano from the San Antonio, Texas—Westside! During the 1960s and 1970s many of us were acquiring our expertise in Chican@ Studies through praxis and praxis theory with explicit or implicit historical materialist perspective. Indeed, it had been through an insurrectional print culture that a renaissance literary field had been emerging, as well as for other disciplinary venues, and it was up to us to affirm our academic legitimacy. However, from the point of view of many an institution—including University of California, Berkeley—legitimacy was constantly questioned by the hegemonic disciplines, some of whose pedigrees went back to the beginning of the twentieth century. Also by late 1970s the right-wing think-tank industry had begun to bloom. Moreover, I thought that I had found a home for Third Woman Press (1979–2004) other than my own house. In fact, I had not.

The most important aspect of my new job on the margins of long-standing literary disciplines—English and Spanish—were my classes in Chican@ literature and comparative women of color literatures. This provided me with a center that straddled the other two major literary fields. Not only did it provide a center but also creative spaces for the study and analysis of new insurrectional voices. I was told by an English Department professor of the beloved left that I could not teach my classes in his department the way I did in Ethnic Studies. It took a while to discover that my insurrectionary frame of intelligibility would not be welcome. However, my course offerings opened the door for affiliation with Women's Studies, which changed its name to Gender and Women's Studies, when, as it were, the theoretical concept of

“gender” arrived, displacing “women and experience” and muting feminist expression, routing the notion of “the personal is political” which had been a mainstay of earlier feminist thought. That is, postfeminism had arrived!

On the other hand, the atmosphere of the Ethnic Studies Department was one of constant tensions that were difficult to understand for a newcomer who was unaware of, at a minimum, the previous ten years of the faculty’s forms of accommodation to each other and the university. Also, the linkage to African American Studies was tenuous. African American Studies had been successful in getting a department of their own and separated from the others in the mid-1970s. And, all of the programs in Ethnic Studies wanted a department of their own—a form of self-determination. My question then, and even now, was why was there no sense of collectivity? Were we not all in the same bargain basement of the grand elite Department Store? It is quite apparent now that I needed a mentor, not to explain our location in the basement, but to explain the tensions among the basement players. However, no such mentor was forthcoming in the department, and I mostly had to live out those tensions in silence. There was very little point in speaking since people would look at me and continue as if I had said nothing. As I learned much later, the mission of the founding players in the Ethnic Studies Department was to not only have a department of one’s own but also a college of one’s own. Ironically, these patriarchal players were as idealistic as I was; however we were out of sync.

The department’s code of honor was one of team-player consensus. That meant that despite the vibrant tensions, the faculty and staff had to hold together in consensus with whatever strategy of resistance was developed against the administration. However, the issue-strategies were developed outside of discussion and debate. In a sense, one was expected to be

compliant, and to me it soon became clear that we were in a raced-class war of positions and indeed, within the department, race and class dominated the curriculum as concepts of choice. That is to say, a heteronormative patriarchy of color emerged against a white supremacist heteronormative patriarchy that is also fond of team players, too. In a sense, the classroom was the only space for self-expression for me where my own voice could be mediated by and through the discussion of texts by queer and feminist women of color. In that pedagogical setting it was possible to address race, class, gender, and sexuality as interconnected and fused multiple modes of experience which could be articulated freely. A factor which put the exclusivity of race and class in question and exposed it as a structured heteronormative patriarchal stranglehold in the university as a whole.

Many of the tensions among the programs and faculty were a result of competition for adequate funding, not just for the department as a whole but between the programs themselves. This form of competition is not necessarily unusual in the elite Department Store, for they too had to compete for funding and there was resentment about losing some of the wealth to Ethnic Studies and African American Studies. The Department Store felt entitled on the grounds of their long-standing legitimacy as disciplines which waged their own competitive lobbying and varied depending on their own status in relation to the most legitimated core of all—mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest one of all? I dare say that in the pecking order of legitimacy both Anglo Americanists and Latin Americanists were second-class citizens, though in relation to us they did not see themselves that way. We, on the other hand, were travelling third class or worse. The resentment may have been attenuated among some through the liberal ideology of progress which, in my view, comprised the academic supportive left. We were the poor relations, or as we say in Spanish, *los arrimados y arrimadas*, which actually

prompted the student hunger strike of 1999 in which I took part—students camping out on the lawns of California Hall at the University of California, Berkeley (UCB) administration building. Little did I know that I would be typed a troublemaker among administrators with which Ethnic Studies concurred at some point. All along, however, all of us had been profiled by the administration, a symbolic demographic captivity, *sui generis*.

However, and perhaps even more alarming to me, there were tensions among the cadre of faculty of color as to which program had the more legitimate roots of oppression and capitalist exploitation—another form of competition—in the course of genocide, slavery, and dehumanization during colonization and the creation of the Anglo American nation-state. As far as I can tell these tensions remain in the political theater of our times, mediated by ideologies of pluralism and somewhat supplanted by a dematerialized multiculturalism, diversity, and postracialism. To add to these tensions, there was competition as to which program was more academically worthy. This valuation in particular was made known to me by a member of the faculty who told me not long after hire that the Chicano Studies program was the weakest academic program in the department, and perhaps I could help change that. Who needs mentors like this one? I got no explanation for the remark in passing. *Why me?* I had scarcely published anything and the short essay published in *This Bridge Called My Back* had been called “shrill” and “too” militant—read “feminist”—by my former employer.

A few years later I was told by a sympathetic left white woman that I and a graduate student of the time had been sowing confusion among the faculty about our sexuality, making them think we were lesbians. What faculty was getting confused, where did the confusion come from? How? And why did it matter so much? Was it that intellectual activist feminism was read as *de facto*

lesbianism? The latter had been a tactic of many a patriarchal sociopolitical movement in order to intimidate the women around it. It is a tactic that has survived to our times and makes heteronormative-oriented women fear feminism. Even recently I heard it from an old guard leftist white man in San Antonio when I responded to a question about Third Woman Press. He asked, “Are you one of those angry lesbians?” “Are you homophobic?” I asked, which silenced him momentarily. In the department, moreover, a male colleague wondered out loud to me how he was going to use my piece in the game. At the time, the contextual implication was that of a piece on a chess board, which in itself is insulting. I learned in time that he was a master of sexual innuendo as he liberally dispensed with double entendres and ambiguity, or as we might say otherwise, Mexican-style—*indirectas*. Weapons of the weak? Many a lesbian or hetero feminist student was brought to tears by this tactic of humiliation which, of course, I got to hear about. A full professor teaching a course in pedagogy devoted class time to a critique of women’s bodies when they made presentations. This finally spilled out into formal complaints to the chair. I advocated for his removal from class and tried to generate a women’s caucus in Ethnic Studies, but my fellow women faculty were reluctant and voted no with their feet. Similarly, another student by another male faculty was told after stating ideas for a dissertation, “And who is going to read you? Another angry Chicana?”

Repeated trivialization and intimidation were continuous tactics of oppression for both the students and the faculty who lent support. Within the department, there were queer and feminist women of color who were screamed at and shut down for questioning male professors on the exclusive race and class conceptualization of history and society in their courses. What about gender and sexuality? They are irrelevant. I found that most of the orthodox Marxists in California agreed. Given that consensus, as such,

these professors felt emboldened to verbally strike us down. One of the most stunning declarations of the irrelevancy of women to the methodological frame of intelligibility regarding socioeconomic issues occurred during my second year at UCB. I attended a lecture on urban gangs. When the Latino professor finished his presentation on the social formation and economy of gangs, I asked how the young women involved with gangs figured into his model. The professor replied without preamble that they did not because they were parasites in the gang economy. In effect, my question was as irrelevant as the young women. I felt shut down by his disrespect. I sensed contempt in his nonchalant demeanor. No one in the room spoke out further. In Southern California, there was a joker, who can also be contemptuous, who was given to refer publicly to the cluster of Chicana professors in Northern California campuses as “las brujas del norte.” Obviously, I was one of them. Can’t you take a joke? It occurs to me that the founding of *Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social* (MALCS) in the mid-1980s may have prompted such disrespectful and injurious name-calling.

The ideologies of raced heteronormativity in these patriarchally-structured and organized universities, for me, allows these baiting attitudes meant to trivialize, put us down, intimidate and/or provoke us into a combative response or put us on the defensive with a call not to get emotional—at which point you want to punch them. Women may be seen always already as too emotional—no, the young women are not parasites, no we are not witches, yes, feminism is relevant to the sociopolitical and economic struggle. We may not have the critical tools or knowledge other than anger at our command to expose the misogynist frame of intelligibility and referents. Often we may not be familiar with their framing. It is outside our field and often difficult to deconstruct. These Latinos/Chicanos were not alone with the attitude toward the courageous women who dared to be feminist or make reference to

feminism. Several years later I encountered this attitude from prominent Latin Americanists. One thought that the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) women's feminist laws, which comprised a demand for freedom to make choices about their lives, were irrelevant; another was reported by a solid source to have been telling audiences in Latin America that feminism was irrelevant. Thusly colonized, oppressed, and exploited indigenous women and intellectual feminist women from the bourgeoisie were being told that they were irrelevant and to conform to the extant patriarchal paradigm.

Then, there is the native informant syndrome where the colonizer gets to play anthropologist and it comes from all directions. I call it a *native informant approach* to conversation because we may be treated as if it was our responsibility to educate the questioner about ourselves and our culture. I am not speaking here of students in the classroom but of faculty who want to get some information on the run. There is no reciprocity and no dialogue. After the American Cultures Center was formed, some of us in Ethnic Studies were invited to form a panel and make presentations on our ethnic research and identity—a classic case of interpellation to assume our proper positions. When I got to the door I saw that the majority were white men and women. Were these the ones who had been for or against the Center? A bit of both? Through the center we were now officially included—in a manner of speaking—in the undergraduate curriculum of American, dematerialized multicultural/pluralist style. In the face of those people in suits I felt like I was part of a dog and pony show; little did I know that there would be many more times for me—tokenization. I changed my mind about my presentation and on the spur of the moment decided to do a philosophical meditation on the concept of identity. I was a nervous wreck and I could not even remember what I said. My intention was to bore them with utterances with which they might already be familiar. From then on, unless it was a specifically Chican@

conference, though I accepted invitations to be part of dog and pony shows, I made sure that my presentation took a feminist women of color critico-theoretical perspective—some Chican@ colleagues were known to say that my work was “blather/babble.” The critico-theoretical perspective was very disappointing to a white woman faculty at another elite institution, who wanted the facts and not the theory. I referred her to a vast bibliography on the subject. What is this? I can read your theory and you cannot read mine?

From my very first graduate seminar in Ethnic Studies (ES) I became controversial. I put two volumes of readings arranged in constellations that included the critical research of both men and women of color, as well as pertinent theoretical critiques by U.S. critics and Eurocentric ones. One of my goals was to generate dialogue and debate points of connections or disconnections in the readings. I was eager to go through the course myself, since this was my first seminar and I was experimenting. I wanted to see if it was possible to constellate different “frames of intelligibility” such that there might be interconnections to discover and simultaneously localize and explain the frames. From my point of view the seminar went well since at a minimum lively debate and dialogue took place, as well as some visceral protests about having to read this or that. On the other hand, some students volunteered points of view on why this or that might be important. My two volumes of readings must have circulated among the faculty because one fine morning I discovered an op-column in my mailbox. An orthodox Marxist was waxing eloquent about the perils of poststructuralism—rebranded as postmodernism for Anglo American localized reproduction and consumption—some of which I had included in the readers. A warning that I be cognizant of the perils? Was I out of bounds? Regardless, I continued my seminars in this style throughout the years. I guess I never presented enough textual or verbal evidence that I was a historical materialist. Since the anti-Eurocentric perspective was general in the department, perhaps using some Eurocentric,

albeit selected, poststructuralist work was held against me. It turned out to be that it would always be so. I almost had a mutiny in a seminar. Fortunately, it was quelled by discussion and debate.

What I call the anti-essentialist movement that actually displaced the earlier feminist debate on the dichotomous nature-culture binary hit the academic airwaves by the end of the 1980s and continued with a strong theoretical force of gender constructionism. Despite its good intentions, motivations, and insights, this movement emerged from a cadre of younger white privileged women whose major focus was to challenge the university's heteronormative patriarchal apparatus of symbolic power. However, it subtextually acquired a white-raced-class postfeminist position that excluded and shut down the voices of queer and feminist women of color, as well as some men of color who could not address their historical experiences of colonizing oppression and exploitation without being charged with essentializing. Even readings included in my seminar packets were now taboo on the basis of essentialism as the anti-essentialist movement reached an academic firestorm and constructed its own exclusionary firewall. Indeed, oppression and exploitation were a construction, but such a construction was not addressed as the result of a racist and misogynist capitalist colonization of the insurrectionary speaking subject—one of which were queer and feminist women of color. Ironically, the very challenge to the legacy of dead white men (as a feminist on campus called them) did not take into account that the heirs of the legacy were in the strongly structured power of the university itself and it was not merely symbolic. It was during this period that Barbara Christian published her essay, "The Race for Theory." When I brought it to the reading circle of Latin Americanists that had invited me to join them, the question was "So what's the point?" One's exchange value reaches a limit and it may well constitute what Chela Sandoval calls the apartheid of theoretical domains in her book, *Methodology of the Oppressed*. When does one

know that one's exchange value has reached its limit? That is my question to all of us queer and feminist women of color.

I was living through intensely irritating and anger-producing double binds and paradoxes. The academic success of privileged white women enabled the political economy of the heirs of dead white men to keep on with its institutionalized racism and diverting our attention with postfeminist tokenizations. In a sense, then, in general, Ethnic Studies became even more inappropriate as the explicit or implicit historical materialism was tarred with the reductionist label of identity politics, which became essentialism. Of course, the Anglo Eurocentric disciplines did not look into the mirror of their own identity politics. I was caught in another double bind, this time in ES, due to my feminist interventionary focus and my interest in a poststructuralism that would further enable that focus. However, what was not understood about my interest was the inquiry into the possible critical tools it provided for the analysis of the continuing force of white supremacy and colonial legacies of European modernities and Enlightenment reason, which in my view continued to dominate the (neo)capitalist structures of the university and its hegemonic hold on the production of knowledge—locally and globally. In old-fashioned terminology, the enormous (post)modernist capacity of the university and the nation-state to co-opt ideas of worth, dematerialize and depoliticize them, and stir in the marketing structure appears insurmountable at times to me.

The Psychotropic Denouement

After ten years of intense psychic battering—by which I mean the abuse of feelings, emotions, and self-perception—in the daily grind of life in the high-class Department Store, sensing myself on the verge of a psychotic breakdown, I agreed to medicate myself with a cocktail of psychotropics and sleeping pills so that I

could continue to function on the job. My practice of rational(ized) suppression of feelings and emotions had not worked well enough. In effect, the patriarchal structure and organization of the university, whether of white hegemony or Ethnic Studies, had slipped in under the radar of self-suppression. Clearly, I had deceived myself that such a strategy would help me survive the climate generated by the suited ones and the general atmosphere in which I was working. I had been, if you will, the only out feminist Chicana in the university achieving the rank of full professor in humanities and social sciences. In fact, I had acquired such a rank because the previous, still moderately liberal, administration perceived me as having exchange value of some minimal sort in its tokenization practices. The promotion in rank was a result of negotiation with an outside work offer. Many a student of color had his/her share of psychic battering in this institution.

The first few years under psychotropic influence provided relief from disabling psychic symptoms, though I had also been diagnosed with diabetes. Like magic I lapsed into emotional indifference within a few months. The daily grind of double binds and piquetitos were muted as if I had dosed myself with flea spray against vermin. However, I slowly discovered that the only job I could complete was to prepare, show up, and teach my classes—always with a tinge of fear and anxiety that my work was not good enough, though the latter was not a new feeling. On the other hand, the drugs protected me from any deep sensing of disrespect and negations in the university-at-large, while helping me maintain a positive attitude with students in the classroom and with those who sought intellectual and moral support for their projects. The majority were queer and feminist women of color who brought their experiences of insult and negation to my office door or over coffee in a shop nearby.

Nevertheless, as the years passed, the simulated lobotomy produced by psychotropics began to show itself when a wave of anger would appear and then

quickly dissipate. My brief periodic waves of anger began to make me more aware of what I began to think of as the blackout of my spirit-being. Apparently anger was the only emotion to make it through, however brief. My organism was getting choked by numbness, as if there was no one within. This sense of being-less-ness within was most emphatically felt when several white women of the beloved left remarked to me about some keynote speakers at the Practicing Transgression Conference I had organized with students: “Are ‘they’ still saying that?” One of the speakers they insulted with this line of questioning was Gloria E. Anzaldúa. The conference was intended to celebrate the 3rd edition of *This Bridge Called My Back*, published by Third Woman Press (2002), which may well have been received by these venerable white women of the beloved left, as “oh, they are still saying that.” It was already known to me that at least one member of the Gender and Women’s Studies Department was going around saying that *Bridge* was a collection of “victim speakers.” Thus, the department that had become a champion of “agency” was hard put to recognize agency in the work of queer and feminist women of color. My own participation in that department had failed to convince anyone that it was time they hired a Chicana, African American, and/or Native American woman. I even tried for a Latin Americanist. I had also failed to convince the Spanish Department to hire someone on U.S. Latin@ Studies, by the way. In their neoliberal democracy of borders, I was their token! Such was my demoralizing conclusion.

Fortunately, I had earned sabbatical leave the spring semester of 2002, wherein I collapsed with exhaustion and clinical depression. The anti-depressants, which are now sometimes called mood stabilizers, were failing. I knew then that I had to do something about this state of affairs. My first instinct was to get a job elsewhere, which I did not get, and that was good because there was no elsewhere in the academic market, though I apparently still had a bit of exchange value going for me in the interview market. By the fall of 2003,

I decided to take the plunge into detoxification, cold turkey style. What were the risks? I did not know, but I was celebrating my sixtieth birthday with detoxification on my own and by the seat of my pants! My situation had become unbearable. In my view, the death of my spirit was at stake.

One of the first effects of detoxification was the loosening of my imaginary and my tongue. One of the first casualties of my loosened tongue was a white male of the beloved left who claimed to be a supporter of people of color. I said to him, “I bring out the Nazi in you, don’t I?” And, if you will, I began to speak in tongues, and brought out the Nazis within multiple others. Further, for my Spring 2004 Gender and Women’s Studies course on feminist theory I constructed a course that took the students back to the future by reading some texts from an earlier phase of feminist works. While it seemed to please some students, others complained loudly that this was not feminist theory! Too many feminists and not enough gender trouble—as if feminists did not have gender trouble! I did not finish the class. Needless to say, the department became angry with me. So did Ethnic Studies since I did not finish the class there either. (I did do final grading for both courses.) Both departments began to find out about my loose tongue!

Early during that same semester, I was being pressed by the dean to submit my case for review. I told him that I could not do it because even looking at the files for submitting my case made me literally sick. Another effect of detoxification, I could not bring myself to look at my own work. He must have heard my refusal well enough because he offered me the funds to hire a graduate student to help me do the job. I submitted my case, which was quickly expedited since I got my letter of assessment and worth within two months. Unprecedented! I think the administration was ready for me. I was on the dean’s list of troublemakers of color—and Chicano/Ethnic Studies

concluded. I think that for the latter I had become a loose can(n)on! Maybe that is what a Chicana feminist is to the patriarchy nearest to her. By this time, Ethnic Studies had refused to take me back full time, with one exception. A few years before, I had transferred part of my appointment to Gender and Women's Studies and Spanish, seeking relief from a hostile environment, thinking that moving around campus would help. Not so: within a couple of years the daily grind of racist tensions laden with class privilege had gotten to me. I wanted to return to Chicana@/Ethnic Studies if only to have just one office and one place to work from, regardless of the problems. But as I said, I was turned down, and what faced me was working in three hostile departments, not to mention the university-at-large.

Thus it was that in mid-April of 2004, I received my letter of the evaluation of my case. I had been detoxing for five months already; as a result, another effect was to loosen the rage that was aroused by the letter. The pay increase was a pittance; Third Woman Press was worth nothing and merited no mention. It never had. My request for equity went nowhere. Obviously, there is no equity for a troublemaker or a loose can(n)on. And as one colleague had put it, "the university wants good citizens." I guess I had a lot of gender trouble of my own making, which makes me laugh ironically these days, or as we say, *calavera* laughter. ¡Así es!

My self-righteous rage rose within and I marched to my Women's Studies class to let the students know there would be no class that day because I was going on strike. I had witnessed the efforts of other professors of color that followed the rules and protocols of rebuttal and I was too exhausted and enraged to go that route, especially since Ethnic Studies had refused my request for return full time. Did the students understand my explanations for my wildcat strike? I will never know. What I do know is that I walked out of

the classroom with my enraged spirit on automatic pilot all the way home, *el coraje en vuelo*. Once I was home I immediately went to my computer to write my letter of rebuttal. I wrote the administrators—with copies to ES and others—calling them “deaf, dead, dicks” and waxing eloquent in justifying my strike, further stating that I would not return until they addressed my grievances. Their idea of addressing my grievances was to ask me to submit to a psychological evaluation. Knowing to some extent the American Psychiatric Association’s preferred modes of treatment and pill-pushing, there was no way that I was going to submit to a gringo-trained psychologist, especially hired by the university to serve internal needs. A friend pointed out to me that my terms of refusal were already ground enough for the suited university to declare me irrational. After all, there are rules and protocols for undertaking a strike—even in labor unions! When all is said and done, I had only one advocate within the ivory tower. She was a queer and feminist woman of color. That is poetic justice!

If in ES and Chicano Studies I seemed to be performing a latter-day Malinche, among many a white progressive I had become a tokenized part of their dog and pony shows. That is, whatever exchange value I had possessed circulated as cheap tokenization. Yet another double bind, caught between the resistance-to-theory court among many colleagues of color and tokenization in the white progressive circles of the university. Most egregious tokenizations came from anticolonialist Latin Americanists and blatant piquetitos from the white women, beloveds of the left who wondered if “they”—queer and feminists of color—were still saying “that.” In brief, I was inspired to detoxify by our own title to the 2002 conference: *Practicing Transgression: Radical Women of Color for the 21st Century*, which is indeed an insurrection of subjugated knowledges.

Conclusion

If “[a]ll experience is [transformed into] meaning of experience,” (rephrasing Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, 30), as Gloria E. Anzaldúa did, I think that I have suggested some meanings in the course of writing this memoir. There is, as well, a profound disillusionment for a feminist idealist who got a front row seat on the degradation of the very notion of university, which, regardless of its continuous false claim to being a public university, has been mimicking the structural corporate model—and today hardly any university is spared from that model; maybe they never were. My medical doctor who had himself been subsumed into the corporate model of practice already knew and had warned me to be careful, perhaps as careful of speech and practice as he was. It seemed preposterous that the university could not tolerate criticism and critique of its own practice and theory. Yet, Fall 2012, students and faculty were brutally assaulted by the university’s police force for their critical Occupy Berkeley sit-in. In comparison, the ethnic students’ hunger strike of Spring 1999 was relatively peaceful. The violent police methods against protesting students escalated as the years passed. The so-called public university has become more privatized and a more free market participant than ever, highly regulated by police discipline in order to maintain its rules of order, global neocapitalist structure and organization, and the dead white men’s legacy in high-tech suits.

The political economy of the university, in my view, is already threaded with violence in collegial voicing. It was there already when I arrived in 1987 but I did not know how to read it in situ—liberal ambiguities, American exceptionalism, UCB’s mantra of excellence, and progressive bosom friends who claimed to be supportive—where equality is nil, especially for queer and feminist women of color. If one does not assimilate into its codes of governance, in the production of knowledge itself, there are punishments

tailored for all of us, meted out in the devaluation of the faculty's work, like arranging a promotion to full professor with a \$1 raise since merit of research cannot be denied, or denying tenure if a faculty's research goes against the grain of corporate interests and/or ideological interests. These are just two cases I was witness to.

Departments like Ethnic Studies, as well as other dissenting studies, are contained and used as symbolic markers of (neo)liberal patriarchal benevolence. Can you imagine if the study of right-wing movements turned its lens on the university itself or if Ethnic Studies turned its critical lenses on the university's corporate structure and organization?

One thing is still certain: we queer and feminist women of color are wedged in or caught in the crossfire of multiple patriarchies inside and outside the university. The challenge for us is to further inquire into the conditions of possibility for the transformations of knowledge production that we can bring off—small, medium, and large. But who/what are our horizontal alliances? I believe that we continue to be part of the insurrection of subjugated knowledges and that our mere existence is transgressive. I may be alienated from the university, but not from myself, kindred-spirit intellectuals nor the library. Is it silly to be such an idealist? A good old Anglo Americanized pragmatic individual would probably say, "Of course." I, and others, might say, "Never!" Because one's idealism can be the template for evaluation of the transformation of the production of knowledge and practices that are actually taking place in both the local and global university. It is another way of saying, "Not yet." For me, there is no transformation in the way I imagined it; however, the globalized high-tech, in their current transformation, is producing the intellectuals of the future that are handmaidens to the global and patriarchal corporatization of the planet.

My parents would not have understood anything I have said. They did not even understand the metaphor-concept Chican@. As my mother once told me, “Ay, hablas muy bonito pero quien te entiende?” Her response to a paper I had given in Spanish. On the other hand, if she and my father could have understood what I have written above, they might have asked, “¿Quién te manda?” mimicking the good old pragmatist—though I hope not. Life without rational(ized) suppression and the un-repression that detoxification produced is good. I think of my unconscious as a vacuum cleaner bag that was emptied out. As some might say in my birthplace, *la regaste*. Indeed, no regrets!

Note

Michel Foucault speaks of “the insurrection of subjugated knowledges” in his book, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*. He speaks of suppressed knowledge, “those blocks of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematising (sic) theory...a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate...naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity” (82). That is, “discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory... (83). His position, however, is stated in the context of Eurocentric hegemonic production of knowledge, which he is critiquing and, in effect, denouncing. I have re-situated his claim in my own context of Anglo-Eurocentric hegemonic production of knowledge and denouncing its marginalization of our work both as queer and feminist women of color, as well as that of people of color in general.