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**ABOVE ART**  


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My first attempt to publish in an academic journal healed a deep and painful wound I had received during my graduate training. In the classic, social science convention, I was taught to write with so-called objectivity or distance and to eliminate from my dissertation traces of my own voice or experience. Although it made no sense to me, I was obedient and hid my injured soul from my peers and professors. Therefore, I was surprised and elated to receive a rejection letter from *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* that demanded as a condition of consideration for publication that I write myself (back) into my analysis of *la quinceañera*, a fifteenth-birthday celebration for girls that marks gender/sex and culture for *mexicanas* in Chicago. The condition gave me permission to include myself in the text without fear, without shame. It felt as if I had found a home in feminist scholarship because clarification of the author’s standpoint or positionality was fundamental, an essential aspect of theory-making.

Twelve years have passed since my rite of passage into feminist academic publishing, and the period has witnessed the recognition of the autobiographical voice as a methodology of feminist scholarship, particularly in U.S. Third World feminist studies.¹ From my observations as editor of *Chicana/Latina Studies: The Journal of Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social*, Gloria Anzaldúa’s work was crucial in advancing this methodology, and I
am convinced that the major reason for her prominence in Chicana feminist theory is her argument for multiple subject positions—race, class, gender, and sexuality along with additional social factors such as immigration, language, religion, and nationality. Not that this advance was always greeted enthusiastically: the 1980s and 1990s also demonstrated strong resistance to autobiographical styles, *testimonio*, and the personal essay written by women, particularly women of color and lesbians.³ For example, during this period ethnic studies, postmodern analysis, and mainstream feminist scholarship stridently opposed or conspicuously ignored the autobiographical and creative prose of Anzaldúa, labeling it poetic but not theoretical, and, worse, divisive or irrelevant. Some domains, such as cultural studies, appropriated her work without granting her recognition.³ Nonetheless, within Chicana feminism, the developments of Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* and *This Bridge Called My Back* that she coedited with Cherrie Moraga are here to stay, and the centrality of a method that draws on personal experience, private memory, *testimonio*, life history, or creative nonfiction is evident in all of the books under review here.
In what follows, I examine the major developments or themes in six books of Chicana feminist thought. That Chicana feminism encourages the use of the autobiographical voice would be the first theme. Arguably even more important is the second theme, one that the autobiographical voice already signals: Chicana feminism advances a transdisciplinary method that surfaces in the structure and organization of the projects as well as the stylistic blending of genres. This crossing and untying of disciplinary boundaries, this methodological innovation with its simultaneous political and theoretical transformations, is a major advancement of Chicana feminist thought. It is significant for two reasons: its cross-disciplinary method produces social change, and it aligns formerly separate fields.

Edén Torres’s explanation of her cross-disciplinary methodology is a useful guide here. In the opening pages of *Chicana without Apology: Chicana sin Vergüenza: The New Chicana Cultural Studies*, Torres clarifies that her intention in the book is to “broaden the scope of cultural studies discussions and practices . . . [in order to] provide general insights for all people interested in forming successful coalitions for radical political work” (2). Torres uses a hybrid methodology that is characterized by transference and change. More than the implied mixing under rubrics of multi- or interdisciplinary studies, transdisciplinary projects operate against boundaries, dismantling the disciplines in the moment that they are used and renovated. In Torres’s own words, it is an “unapologetic challenge to the traditions and systems that have tried to silence Chicanas and so many others” (2). Torres confesses that she draws on “the knowledge left to me by grandmothers and great aunts . . . and several wise Chicana mentors.” “Following [their] advice . . . , I have taken theories and concepts from a wide range of disciplines and combined them with the lessons I’ve learned through observation and experience. What emerges as I close my eyes to compose, listening to the voices of all the precious women in my life, is the theory and language of struggle and endurance” (2).

A third theme is also evident in Torres’s autobiographical narrative that recalls her conversations with her mentors and guidance from her elder kin: Chicana feminist thought emerges from collaboration and discussion. Whether single-authored books or anthologies, Chicana feminist theory develops from and through partnerships and conversations or,
as the five editors of *Chicana Feminisms: A Critical Reader* note, “the process of debate and dialogue . . . has always been integral to Chicana feminist theory and practice” (1). These editors’ reference to the process of debate and dialogue is intended to signal the historical challenge Chicanas have made to “masculinist projects, such as the Chicano movement, or within predominantly white, middle-class feminist circles” (1), but also point beyond, accounting for both gender and race, respectively.

A fourth theme is the move to “speak secrets.” This is made evident in Deena J. Gonzalez’s chapter, “Speaking Secrets: Living Chicana Theory,” in the often-overlooked anthology *Living Chicana Theory*, edited by Carla Trujilla (49), in which Gonzalez explores silences around sexuality, homophobia, domestic violence, and internalized oppression. Significantly, she reminds us that Chicana lesbians also struggle for space and voice, or what Emma Pérez, in *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (xix), refers to as “*sito y lengua*” (place and language). This struggle for a Chicana lesbian space and voice has been contentious and even painful within Chicana feminist theorizing. For example, Gonzalez documents the homophobic attacks on Chicana lesbians within the professional organizations, National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies and Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social (MALCS). Recognizing that antiracist and antisexist movements are not free of oppressive politics, Gonzalez initiates a dialogue about the secret of homophobia in order to create social change within and across political organizing. Although no response has been made by the “male-identified women” or organizations that systematically inflicted pain and practiced exclusion against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) people, the ensuing debates and dialogues have advanced the formation and development of Chicana feminist thought, even if this is unevenly acknowledged in the works under review here.

Similarly, Torres breaks a silence that informs our pedagogy. She calls on us to recognize and name “internalized domination,” a stance or position that is similar to race, class, gender, or heterosexual privilege but may also be imaginary or invented by a person who does not possess such privilege but claims it as her own. It is the location that students inhabit in the
Even as Chicana feminist thought discloses secrets, however, it does not pretend to uncover all silences, particularly those gaps in the archives. Instead as Yolanda Chávez Leyva’s “Listening to the Silences in Latina/Chicana Lesbian History,” Verónica A. Guerra’s “The Silence of the Obejas: Evolution of Voice in Alma Villanueva’s ‘Mother, May I,’” and Sandra Cisneros’s “Woman Hollering Creek” (all in *Living Chicana Theory*) suggest, Chicana feminism looks differently at silence, examining what is said, what is not said, and what is said by the silences.

A fifth theme evident in the works under review here is the ability to align previously separate theoretical domains. This approach is explicitly identified by Chela Sandoval in her *Methodology of the Oppressed*, and also present in all of the works under review. It is a development that is coterminous with and interdependent on the other themes addressed here: it is a result of transdisciplinarity, it is a benefit of collaboration, and it offers possibility for breaking additional silences, particularly on queer experiences. Chicana feminist thought joins formerly separate intellectual domains that, according to Sandoval, operate independently and are rarely read beyond their own canons and bibliographies. Social transformation, which I do not identify as a new theme because I consider it foundational, is a goal of Chicana feminism, and the desire for social change has generated a tactic, or method, that links divided theoretical domains. Alignment across fields and schools of thought is the logic of social transformation.

Finally, for my sixth theme, I turn again to Torres. The title of her book, *Chicana without Apology/Chicana sin Vergüenza*, describes the general quality of all of these works. Chicana feminist thought inhabits a proactive space that does not seek approval, acceptance, or intellectual legitimacy from exterior sources and domains. The allegory of arrival through which Ellie D. Hernández describes the field of Chicana studies does not account for the tone, language, or tactic used in these works that reject so-called admittance and acceptance into middle-class society, the halls of knowledge, or “into something better.” Writing without apology, *sin vergüenza* without shame, Chicana feminists employ a bold language and stance that
does not anticipate or reproduce social codes and norms. Chicana feminist thought waits for no one.

Contrast this with Ruth Behar’s ambivalence—in the words of this Latina, an “excuse me tongue,”7 in her chapter, “Response: Sad Movies Make Me Cry,” in Chicana Feminisms. This ambivalence simply does not appear in Chicana critical production. Behar is ambivalent about the mixing of genres and she worries that the results are unrecognizable to conventional disciplines. She agonizes, “Does our writing become so unclassifiable that it gets lost in the cracks of all those forms we are meshing together? Does its ni aquí ni allá (neither here nor there) quality render it too amorphous to make a mark in the very fields . . . that we wish both to be accepted by and, at the same time, transform?” (111). But Chicanas and other Latinas do not appear to share Behar’s caution and fear. They write in many genres, mixing styles in one text and blending genres within one anthology. Below I describe the cross-genre approach as another aspect of transdisciplinarity.

END OF ACADEMIC APARTHEID: ALIGNMENT AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY METHODS

Chicana feminist scholarship is part of the larger theoretical and methodological project known as U.S. Third World feminism, and as such, in Chela Sandoval’s words in Methodology of the Oppressed, it is “capable of aligning such divided theoretical domains into intellectual and political coalition” (71). In her groundbreaking analysis of U.S. Third World feminism and its intellectual and political genealogies, Sandoval argues that this “eccentric” group has the capacity to join several schools of thought that independently examine power and oppression (42). Her publication and the works in this review realize or enact the alignment she describes, making possible successful resistance to globalizing capital. The “apartheid of theoretical domains” has ended (71).

Sandoval’s book brilliantly puts into practice the method, theory, and politics that she describes as U.S. Third World feminism and its particular mode of differential consciousness. It makes use of the work of cultural theorists, mainstream feminists, and U.S. Third World feminists in order to illustrate that developments in social theory make U.S. Third World
feminism required reading in postmodern, poststructural, postcolonial, feminist, and ethnic studies. Sandoval’s book is a tour de force of theoretical genealogies that connect these disparate theoretical approaches/methods through the advances made by U.S. Third World feminists, which enable resistance and emancipation.

As Ruby C. Tapia noted in an earlier review, the alignment that Sandoval produces demonstrates that social analysts in these fields “have not spoken to each other or read each other’s work,” even though they share a vision for authentic liberation. Sandoval performs a close reading of Frederic Jameson, for example, to document that although his assessment of the loss of the citizen-subject under postmodern conditions is accurate, the concept of the “fractured” citizen-subject is nothing new.

If, as Jameson argues, the formerly centered and legitimated bourgeois citizen-subject of the first world (once anchored in a secure haven of self) is set adrift under the imperatives of late-capitalist cultural conditions . . . then the first world subject enters the kind of psychic terrain formerly inhabited by the historically decentered citizen-subject: the colonized, the outsider, the queer, the subaltern, the marginalized. (27)

Furthermore, Sandoval continues, Jameson need not despair about this loss since the “historically decentered citizen-subject” has precisely the tools for survival and “decolonizing oppositional practices that were developed in response to such fragmentation under” colonialism, imperialism, material and political inequity, and other systems of oppression (33). Sandoval offers, for instance, Anzaldúa’s coalthum state as one such survival tool. In the domain of poststructuralism, Sandoval illustrates that Roland Barthes’s cynicism about the citizen-subject’s inability to “decode and deconstruct ideology” (104) and the semiotician’s alienation or “self-imposed estrangement” (134) fails to account for the methodology of the oppressed. She acknowledges the utility of Barthes’s semiotic analysis, but notes its inability to witness or envision the shifting, nomadic consciousness of the decentered citizen-subject. Most critically, Sandoval documents Barthes’s ignorance of Frantz Fanon’s Black Skin/White Masks, which was written before Barthes’s Mythologies and which anticipates the French philosopher’s questions about the possibility of an emancipatory consciousness under colonial domination. Here Fanon’s reading of the colonized (and
colonizer) points to a methodology of the oppressed that “is formulated and taught out of the shock of displacement, trauma, violence, and resistance” (77).

In the same way that Sandoval integrates poststructuralism, postmodernity, and postcolonialism with U.S. Third World feminism, she demonstrates the blind spots of mainstream feminist theory. She argues that “hegemonic feminism” and its classification of feminist thought (that is, liberal, socialist, radical) is not only inaccurate but also misleading. According to Sandoval, U.S. Third World feminism disappears under this classificatory scheme and therefore, mainstream feminism cannot see the location of the new citizen-subject and the site of oppositional consciousness that unites the various tactics, methods, theories, and politics for emancipation. As she has described elsewhere, oppositional consciousness is comprised of five principal categories, “which are politically effective means for changing the dominant order of power.” The value of oppositional consciousness is its ability to effectively transform the experience of oppression. Thus, it is critical in the understanding of emancipation.

The bulk of the book functions to illustrate how the divided theoretical domains of postmodernism, feminist theory, cultural studies, postcolonial analysis, and other separatist intellectual projects are incapable of comprehending a methodology of the oppressed and its ability to resolve the “oppressive authoritarianism” under global capitalism (58). In short, Sandoval argues that the invisibility of U.S. Third World feminism within academia is no longer possible, unless scholars act out of hatred or fear. Sandoval offers love as the hermeneutic that allows scholars and activists to create an “alliance and affection across lines of difference that intersect both in and out of the body” (170). It is love that not only ends academic apartheid, but also it is the aligning ethos of tomorrow’s social movement.

Moving across national borders and disciplinary divides, Emma Pérez, in The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History, also does not allow geopolitical boundaries or the academic domains of U.S. history, ethnic studies, and literary criticism to limit her analysis of history and historiography. Fields such as U.S. history are limited by definitions of a “national” space and specific periods associated with a nation’s development. Instead Pérez looks transnationally in her construction of a “third space femi-
Karen Mary Davalos

nism,” documenting Chicana and Mexicana activities on both sides of the border but more importantly aligning social histories, feminist and critical cultural studies, and psychoanalytic and postmodern analyses. Her intellectual flexibility and the porous nature of her methodology allow her to rescue from silence and obscurity the lives and politics of these women. Her work considers the “third space feminism” of Yucatán’s socialist revolution (1915-1918), the transnational organization, the Partido Liberal Mexicano, and women’s social clubs and mutual aid societies in Houston during the 1920s. Pérez’s concept, the “dialectics of doubling,” in which women mimic patriarchy even as they struggle against it, is a more hopeful and productive concept than “internalized oppression” because it allows us to see feminist process as moving toward another state of consciousness and leading to liberation. She also calls this “feminism-in-nationalism,” a term that avoids the binary (feminist versus patriarchal), accounting for the ways in which feminist action or language exists in sites of oppression and erasure. Moving diasporically and crossing the border several times as does her analysis of third space feminism, Pérez explores La Malinche; the film Silent Tongue and the fictional Indian character by the same name; Delgadina, a fictional character of a popular Mexican ballad; and Selena, the murdered Chicana singer. Drawing on Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari, Pérez traces sexuality and desire, noting that third space feminism refocuses and transforms the gendered, raced, and bodily expectation about the “India/mestiza/Chicana” (103). “When perceived as agents, [rather than suppressed, desired, or seduced sexual bodies], women cast their own fantasies” (116). For Pérez these women are located in an “in-between space,” Sandoval’s differential consciousness, and they shift, mutate, and travel, engaging what she refers to as “the decolonial imaginary” and showing that liberation is a possibility.

Similar to Sandoval and Pérez, Rosa Linda Fregoso, in meXicana Encounters: The Making of Social Identities on the Borderlands, aligns geopolitical and disciplinary boundaries to examine “social identities on the borderlands” in order to determine paths for social change (xiii). Looking closely at various types of cinema and popular visual culture, Hollywood actresses and media portrayals of them, and film criticism over a one-hundred-year
period, Fregoso investigates the representations of meXicanas as aspects of nation-building projects; gendered, raced, and sexed bodies; and materialist, racist, and patriarchal strategies for power.

meXicana Encounters joins Chicana feminist scholarship with Mexican and Latin American studies, political economic analysis, and cultural studies. This text opens with the suggestion that Chicana feminist thought has in the last two decades securely moved beyond cultural, nationalist, and gendered theoretical and political divides. The dedication page reads “for global justice,” foreshadowing the book’s attention to transformative movements and coalition politics. Fregoso explains that the book’s title “meXicana” is “the interface between Mexicana and Chicana, and [it] draws attention to the historical, material, and discursive effects of contact zones and exchanges among various communities on the Mexico-U.S. border” (xvi). She does not erase the differences between Mexicanas and Chicanas, and she does not ignore the “amalgamation of Mexicana and Chicana within cultural representation” (xvi).

This type of alignment between meXicanas is essential for communities that increasingly struggle to understand how recent Mexican immigrants share histories, experiences, and economic disenfranchisement with “sixth-generation Chicanas and Chicanos,” a popular phrase that indicates the length of residency, embeddedness within dominant U.S. culture, and shifting political positions on Spanish language, the border, education, and working-class solidarity. Although ideologically distinct from a Mexican American subject-position, a “sixth-generation Chicana” might not immediately recognize how she, like Mexicanas, is racialized and gendered. Both are relegated to low-wage employment in the service sector and experience domestic and sexual violence. Their residential or citizenship status does not create social or political presence in public space. Contrary to popular myths, the sixth-generation Chicana might not speak Spanish, graduate from high school, or own a home; whereas Mexican migrants have a better chance of completing high school and owning a home. The combinations, therefore, of racialization and gender and class hierarchies makes them structurally similar, even when specific experiences in education and housing are different. Her orienta-
tion calls for a recognition of the ways that meXicanas live transnationally and “forge binational and multistate networks and affiliations” (xvi).

In addition, Fregoso investigates how media, film, and global production conflate the two populations as brown female bodies. The material differences between Mexicanas and Chicanas can get in the way of political mobilization, but it more frequently leads to social inequity and death for both. For example, Fregoso calls for a more nuanced understanding of sexual violence on the U.S.-Mexico border. She examines privatization, maquila or offshore factories, and corporate welfare, topics also raised by Torres, to explain the murders of women in Juarez, Mexico, and El Paso, Texas. Fregoso links her critique of global capitalism to an analysis of the judicial and legal systems in Mexico and the United States as factors that shape or support sexual violence against meXicanas. Her skilled analysis allows us to see the connections between sexual violence at the border and the 1994 Zapatista uprising on the eve of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (19). Fregoso (along with Torres, Sandoval, Olga Nájera-Ramírez, and Aída Hurtado in Chicana Feminisms; and Córdova and Castañeda in Living Chicana Theory) critically assesses a global economy and how it creates illness, disempowerment, violence, and suffering among women of color, particularly indigenous women.

**The Intensities of Transdisciplinarity:**

*Styles, Languages, and Organization*

As noted above, the use of autobiographical voice is one tactic of transdisciplinary methods. What I wish to emphasize here is the depth and intensity of transdisciplinary Chicana feminist projects. The interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary methods of alignment across formerly divided theoretical domains is deeply embedded in each of the works reviewed here. It is a style of organizing thought. It is a style of writing. It is both cross-genre—stylistics are mixed, blended, and reformulated—and cross-disciplinary—methods of investigation, theorizing, and orientation are reused and re-shuffled. Certainly, the blending of genres is what marked *This Bridge Called My Back* and *Borderlands/La Frontera*; Maylei Blackwell’s essay, “Contested Histories: Las Hijas de Cuauhtémoc, Chicana Feminism, and Print Culture in the Chicana Movement, 1968-1973,” in *Chicana Feminisms* documents that early
Chicana feminist print culture also used multiple styles and genres. These works extend and develop the cross-genre and cross-disciplinary approach. More importantly, it is a transdisciplinary method that is at once about identity but also speaks to much more than bounded, or multiple, subject-positions. It also addresses disciplinary conventions and schools of thought.

Trujillo’s anthology, *Living Chicana Theory*, Torres’s *Chicana without Apology*, and *Chicana Feminisms*, the volume that includes Behar’s ambivalence about mixing genres, are evidence that Chicana feminist writing crosses and blends genres. These projects include genres such as poetry, creative nonfiction, scholarly prose, and autobiography. In her reflection anthologized in *Chicana Feminisms*, Norma Cantú explores the writing process for her *Canícula*, the book for which she developed the neologism “fictional autobiographic.” Although seeming to classify *Canícula*, it also disrupts three genres: autobiography, ethnography, and fiction. In her reflection about the writing process, she summons other genres, including *testimonio*, creative nonfiction, and the private journal, which in turn problematize Western notions of truth/fiction, individual/collective, and memory/history. This stylistic mestizaje (the notion of racial and cultural mixing) is a characteristic of the works under review, and as I suggest, the authors do so without apology.

In the hands of Torres, social analysis finds evidence in the wisdom of poetry, *testimonio*, and short story. Torres declares that her writing style is deliberately nonacademic, by which she means it employs the strategies of storytelling—suspense, humor, repetition, or the poetic—and social analysis to develop a theory of power and responses to the abuse of power. In addition, she quotes from playwright and novelist Lucha Corpi’s *Déjate’s Song* to explain that coalitions are fragile collectives and therefore, after society has been transformed, “That’s when the real struggle begins” (182). She turns to Pat Mora’s poem “Legal Alien” to explain how “Chicanas/os can experience uneasiness in a Mexican context” and in “the social environment” of the United States and how we cover our disequilibrium (31-32).

Alternatively, it would be inaccurate to say that Pérez writes in a colloquial style, but she does make use of the interrogative, asking simple questions of social theorists. To Deleuze and Guattari she asks, “Is everything a machine?” (116); to Chicano historians, “How have women fit into
the categories of ‘immigrant’ and ‘Mexican American’ generations?” (79). The scholarship she reviews cannot answer these questions.

Torres and Pérez are not the only ones to write unabashedly y con corazón. The editors of Chicana Feminisms boldly publish Spanish and English texts, a significant move during a period of intense xenophobia in the United States as anti-Mexican, anti-bilingualism, and pro-English-only movements gather power. This is also a significant shift because the collection is decidedly academic, published by a university press, for instance, whereas the earlier 1980s anthologies were grassroots projects published by small independent presses such as Norma Alarcón’s Third Woman Press. More precisely, Chicana Feminisms deliberately makes use of scholarly methods (such as the presentation of the argument, literature reviews), conventions (such as notes and citations), and formats (such as the critical essay, the response, the seminar), and it includes essays and responses written in Spanish, English, Spanish and English code switching, and Spanglish.

There is also a pattern, a poetics or aesthetic, if you will, for conventions of fiction. Pérez, Fregoso, and Sandoval and several of the authors in the anthologies infuse their works with metaphors and allegories that shift the text into narrative prose. It is the conventions of fiction—suspense, plot, character development, and scene—that indicate a new direction within the transdisciplinary method. For example, in meXicana Encounters, Fregoso organizes the book by an “inverted chronology,” starting with contemporary practices that make Mexicanas and Chicanas visible and then proceeding to past cultural processes that render them invisible. This organization of the book, a trajectory from visibility to invisibility, is not just coherent but compelling. Each chapter unfolds like a mystery—as if the reader is discovering the conflicts and characters that created the disappearance of Mexicanas and Chicanas. The organization turns the book into a series of plot twists and suspense as one political economic shift relocates Mexicana and Chicana visibility in film, media, or public space.

Although the editors of Chicana Feminisms do not emphasize poetic language or conventions of fiction, the work is still thoroughly transdisciplinary in its organization. The anthology is best read front to back in order to hear the method and theory of interlingual, intradialogic tracks. As the editors note, the book is organized into eleven chapters, each
begins with an essay and ends with a response—systematically engaging a process of dialogue and debate. But the first voice to enter the stage is Elba Rosario Sánchez, who writes autobiographically and poetically in Spanish and English, a significant move in an academic text published in the United States. In a similar organizational strategy, Cantú’s reflections about Canícula and the use of the autobiographical voice appear in chapter three, and Norma Klahn’s analyses of Chicana autobiography appear in chapter four. Cantú’s interpretation sets up and precedes an analysis of her book. Relatedly, in chapter two Blackwell examines early print culture and Anna NietoGomez, a creator of early feminist newspapers and magazines, provides the response. This organization of the book employs a decolonial method in which the subject “talks back,” offering her own subjectivity and analysis. Throughout the book, each chapter engages a specific dialogue, but topics recirculate in proceeding chapters so that one response engages a chapter later in the book. For instance, chapter seven includes Patricia Zavella’s analysis of silences within Chicana and Mexicana conversations about sex, and chapter eight by Hurtado extends the topic in her life history of Inocencia, a Mexican migrant woman who endures various types of sexual abuse. This organization of the text also supports a strategy of transcendence, or transdisciplinaryity, in which topics are examined from multiple points of view, disciplines, or authors, leaving the reader with a sense of direction but not completion. The transdisciplinary method does not promote closure or totality.

When the goal is social transformation, Chicana feminists draw on multiple tactics, as Sandoval argues, in their struggles and resistance movements. It is a politics of coalition and tactical embrace of ideologies that solve the problem at hand. For these scholars, the mobile method is more effective than linear summation, universal resolutions, closure without fundamental change, or theoretical apartheid.

Alliances of Chicana Feminism

Given their sense of urgency and desire to create social change, it is not surprising that the scholar-activists of Chicana feminism engage in collective action, group discussion, and collaboration. Concrete theoretical engagements can be traced across the texts. Whether it is in research
centers, seminars, or workshops at MALCS and other professional meetings, or through engagement with more intimate circles of *colegas* (colleagues) who are willing to read each other’s writing-in-progress, each book was stimulated by or in some cases produced through deliberate collaboration. In her introduction to *Living Chicana Theory*, Trujillo acknowledges the lineage from MALCS that was “the spark ignited” to “empower women to combine activism with scholarship” through its annual summer institutes (14). She then places the book “in a long line” of activist-scholarship generated or inspired by MALCS, such as *Chicana Critical Issues* (1993) and *Building with Our Hands* (1993). Similarly, *Chicana Feminisms* is the product of a seminar, colloquium series, and a research cluster at the University of California, Santa Cruz, the place where *Methodology of the Oppressed* “was born,” according to Sandoval (xv). As Katherine Quinn Sanchez suggests, Chicana/Latina feminist anthologies are developing a collaborative approach that crosses disciplines and systematically aims to resist the “misconceptions” the contributors have about each other as authors and subjects. Such collaboration is something deeply engrained in Chicana feminist theorizing, and it is more than the gracious acknowledgments of colleagues in the opening pages of a book. Chicana feminists are a community of scholars who establish alliances as a tactic of resistance to their guest-worker or undocumented status in academia.

More significantly, the works are conversing about the current global economy and its painful effects on people of color, women, queers, and youth. The entire group shares a critique of power and the authors speak across their texts to each other. Much of the shared theoretical trends are described above, but a few are worth emphasizing here. In general, these works employ a Gramscian notion of hegemony and counter-hegemony, consistently examining the processes of resistance (and accommodation) within and against structures of oppression. They advance intersectional analyses by consistent reconsideration of multiple social positions—not just race, gender, class, and sexuality, but also language or migration—and the ways in which these intersections are changed by varying social realities. Although the internal topics of the works are diverse—film, literature, social movements, pedagogy, music, consciousness—the projects orient the
analysis through political economies, or power. They also look historically and transnationally so that the roots of colonization, imperialism, and invasion are part of the conversation and not just backdrops to contemporary social processes. This is the methodology of Chicana studies, but enriched by a consistency and fully articulated socio-political analysis and grounded in gender, sexuality, race, class, and other social signifiers.

Silence and Queer Experience/Theory

One conversation is incomplete or registers more silences than articulations, debates, and discussions. My above observations about collaboration and alliance makes use of romantic and celebratory language that cannot account for the presence of homophobia and the silence around queer experience and theory. Before I fully turn to the silence or fragile location of queer Chicana studies within Chicana feminism, I want to address silence itself as a theme of the works under review. If Chicana feminism does not move past its current incarnation, a moment that could be labeled feminism-in-heterosexism because it parallels Pérez’s logic of feminism-in-nationalism, it will unhinge the alliances and the possibility for authentic liberation.

Chicana feminists, particularly lesbian scholars, pay attention to silences and hear them differently. First, silence is not viewed as an absence nor as an oppressive or passive gesture. In the archives or popular culture, Chicana feminists look for what is said by those silences, and they seek agency in silence. They turn quiet into social analysis. Second, they also break silence as a methodology to recover, recuperate, and advance theoretical analyses and social movements. For instance, Pérez’s Decolonial Imaginary is a treatise against the ways Chicanas have been silenced by colonial and masculine narratives. It is a recuperative project that brings Chicana voices and agency to a new historiography. Sandoval’s alignment of postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, and mainstream feminist theory with U.S. Third World feminism is another recuperation from the margins as the latter becomes the force through which new social movements, theories, and possibilities emerge. In their contributions to the anthology, Living Chicana Theory, Sandra Cisneros (“A Woman of No Consequence: Una Mujer Cualquiera”) writes about the invisibility of
“la otra mujer” and the social silence that surrounds her even as she enters the private space of home; Elizabeth Martínez (“Chingón Politics’ Die Hard: Reflections on the First Chicana Activist Reunion”) documents the continued silencing of Chicanas within el movimiento; Alicia Gaspar de Alba (“The Politics of Location of the Tenth Muse of America: An Interview with Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz”) breaks the silence about Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz as a “lesbian separatist feminist who crossdressed as a nun to hide . . . what would have been interpreted as heresy”; and in meXicana Encounters, Fregoso documents Chicana countermemories to undo the erasure of Chicanas and Mexicanas in Hollywood, silent films, and the theater business along the border. Several authors also break silences on domestic and sexual violence, undoing the myth of the family as sanctuary, and building on a feminist legacy.

In Living Chicana Theory Teresa Córdova offers a meta-analysis of the academy’s hidden hierarchies and systems of oppression. Torres further develops this topic by breaking the silence on stratification among Latina and women’s studies students based on material conditions and color. She looks closely at how the authorities of class and whiteness allow professors to “create chaos in the lives of underprivileged people” if universal sisterhood is assumed in our classrooms (143). Through her skilled investigation of classroom dynamics Torres finds an important silence to break, as she extends the critique of power to the academy, thereby providing faculty with the tools to understand their own location, educating administrators about quantitatively and qualitatively different experiences in the classroom, and suggesting new alliances across students and faculty of color. According to Torres, Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed does not translate easily for faculty of color who teach in predominantly white institutions. Although Freire’s pedagogy asks us to share power with students, as Torres illustrates, faculty of color do not enjoy the chance to give up authority because their majority students do not grant it to them. Instead faculty of color must comprehend how internalized dominance organizes the classroom. Internalized dominance is the view or position that results in unintentional classism, sexism, and homophobia when students or others in the academy display “assumed superiority, social authority, and [a] belief that they can afford to dismiss [women, LGBTQ faculty, and faculty of
color” (77). The classroom itself becomes a site of contested power, even as women of color faculty teach a critical curriculum about structure, political economy, and gendered or raced power. Majority students or others who have internalized domination do not receive the transformative curriculum of women’s and ethnic studies departments, jeopardizing the potential for social change and alliance. Torres’s analysis explains our fragile location in the university.

This type of vulnerability spreads across all of Chicana feminism because of its inconsistent treatment of queer experience and theory. Contrary to Ignacio García’s homophobic assessment of Chicana/o studies, the study of Mexican-origin populations has seen the most significant theoretical and expository developments from Chicanas and lesbian feminists.16 However, the work of lesbian scholars, the experiences of queer Chicanas and Chicanos, and the place of queer theory continue to slide into and out of visibility and invisibility.17 I privilege a linear development of thought, admitting that Torres, Sandoval, and Pérez argue that social movements are more attuned to “dynamic and cyclical process” through which emancipation is achieved (Torres, 159). In my attempt to ally myself with the dispossessed, I desire urgency and progressive change toward liberation. Intellectually, I can live with the “revitalization cycle” that Torres and others describe, but spiritually it leaves me wanting for the next stage of the turn in which heteronormativity and homophobia disappear.

Drawing on the now-established practice of queer inscriptions in This Bridge Called My Back and Borderlands/La Frontera, Living Chicana Theory is perhaps the clearest line from the genealogical legacy of U.S. Third World feminist publications of the 1980s. It engages, documents, makes room for, and theorizes un sitio y lengua of Chicana lesbian experience. As noted in an earlier review, “lesbian sexuality . . . receives the most attention” in the anthology, exploring desire, exploding myths, and naming homophobia within antisexist and antiracist politics.18 More than half of the twenty-one chapters speak to lesbian experience and theory; marking this anthology as one of the most important developments in queer and Chicana studies. This balance of queer and heterosexual voices and theories moves us closer to a moment of emancipation.
Although the bulk of the works reviewed here were published after *Living Chicana Theory*, nowhere are attempts to develop queer theory more balanced than in Trujillo’s anthology. For example, *Chicana Feminisms* includes only two articles on queer experience and theory: Hernández’s analysis of Pérez’s first novel, *Gulf Dreams*, and Zavella’s documenting of “sex talk” about bisexual and lesbian women. The development of queer Chicana studies is not only a matter of including queer literature, histories, *rancheras* (a genre of traditional Mexican music), art, or cartographies; conceptual and discursive (linear) progress can also include theoretical deconstructions that queer the social norm. Sandoval, Torres, Pérez, and Fregoso provide some application of queer theory, and more importantly, they lay a foundation for recognizing and mobilizing queer social transformations. I crave, however, a practice that approximates and advances Torres’s method that returns again and again to examples of lesbian experiences within Chicano and white communities. Such tactile, explicit, and balanced interventions against homophobia as are present in *Living Chicana Theory* can rapidly move us forward.

Two qualities of Chicana feminist thought leave me hopeful. The central role of debate and dialogue, identified by the editors of *Chicana Feminisms* and described by González, allows me to anticipate conversations and alliances that will propel queer Chicana studies onto solid ground. I expect that the relative lack of attention to queer theory and experience in much Chicana feminist/studies literature will be short lived. Additionally, the transformative premise of Chicana feminism will not allow for a reversal or sustained backlash against the LGBTQ successes of the 1980s and 1990s. Unlike the disciplines from which they borrow, Chicana feminists insist on a scholarship that is accountable to social problems and that aims to root out injustice and expose artificial hierarchies and methods of exclusion. The critical engagement with the global economy and how it disrupts the lives of people, particularly impoverished, racially marginalized, women, queer, and Third World populations, is the foundation of Chicana feminism, and such a foundation cannot sustain the silence on queer theory, methodology, and experience. It will continue to speak without apology for authentic liberation.
Notes
1. The anthology, *I Am Aztlán: The Personal Essay in Chicano Studies*, ed. Chon A. Noriega and Wendy Belcher (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, 2004) is another example of the reach and presence of this methodology. The editors got the idea to anthologize a dozen personal essays because of the high volume of submissions to *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, the journal they edit and manage, that incorporated or made use of the autobiographical voice.


4. Not all of the authors reviewed here identify their work as “transdisciplinary.” Many refer to their cross-disciplinary methods as a “multi-” or “interdisciplinary,” even while their projects transcend the boundaries, theories, and methods upon which they draw.

5. Because González leaves unspoken the details of the secret and does not name the perpetrators, researchers can turn to the recently acquired MALCS Papers housed at the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Library, which include extensive documentation of the vicious attacks against Chicana lesbians in the 1990s.


7. The words “excuse-me tongue” are from Norma E. Cantú, “‘My Excuse-Me Tongue’ or a Chicana in the English Classroom,” Conference on College Composition and Communication, Minneapolis, 1979, ERIC Database, ED175030. See also Lorna Dee Cervantes, “For the Young White Man Who Asked Me How I, an Intelligent Well-Read Person Could Believe in the War Between Races,” in *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1990), 4-5.


9. Coalticue is the name of an Aztec goddess of life and death, birth and renewal. For Anzaldúa, the coalticue state is the knowledge that emerges from critical consciousness about one’s collective history as a woman of color from the Americas.

10. Among other works by these authors, Sandoval is discussing Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press,

11. Chela Sandoval, “U.S. Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World” Genders 10 (Spring 1991): 2-3. She “characterizes them as ‘equal rights,’ ‘revolutionary,’ ‘supremacist,’ ‘separatist,’ and ‘differential’ ideology forms. All these forms of consciousness are kaleidoscoped into view when the fifth form is utilized as a theoretical model which retroactively clarifies and gives new meaning to the others.” The fifth mode, differential consciousness, travels between the other four and produces a new modality in the process.


17. Although it arrived too late for this review, Catriona Rueda Esquibel’s With Her Machete in Her Hand: Reading Chicana Lesbians, Chicana Matters Series (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), I am optimistic about its ability to balance and stabilize the transdisciplinary domain of Chicana feminism as a site of queer theory.