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Feminism on the Border: From Gender Politics to Geopolitics

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Is it possible for Chicanas to consider ourselves part of this "sisterhood" called feminism? Can we assume that our specific interests and problems will be taken care of by our Marxist companeros? In her essay, "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State," Catharine MacKinnon decrees that "Is]exuality is to feminism what work is to marxism: that which is most one's own yet most taken away" (1982, SIS). MacKinnon argues that while we can draw parallels between Marxist and feminist methodologies, we must remember not to conflate these two "theories of power and its distribution" (1982, SI6), that one theory must not be subsumed into the other. She continues:

What if the claims of each theory are taken equally seriously, each on its own terms? Can two social processes be basic at once? Can two groups be subordinated in conflicting ways, or do they merely crosscut? Can two theories, each of which purports to account for the same thing—power as such—be reconciled? Or, is there a connection between the fact that the few have ruled the many and the fact that those few have been men? (s 17)

But to the Chicana, a woman with a specific history under racial and sexual and class exploitation, it is essential that we further problematize the feminist/Marxist discussion by adding the complication of race and ethnicity. Our feminist sisters and Marxist companeros/as urge us to take care of gender and class issues first and race will naturally take care of itself. Even MacKinnon, as thorough as she is, constantly watching that she herself does not recreate a monolithic "woman," uses footnotes to qualify the difference between the white woman's and the black woman's situations. She claims to have checked her statements "to see if women's condition (203)tion is shared, even when contexts or magnitudes differ" (s ~o, note

7). If her check system fails, then "the statement is simply wrong and will have to be qualified or the aspiration (or the theory) abandoned" Is~o, note 71.

My project does not suggest that we abandon the aspiration nor the theory. It does insist, however, that our white feminist "sisters" recognize their own blind spots. When MacKinnon uses the black woman as her sign for all dispossessed women, we see the extent to which Chicanas, AsianAmerican, Native American, or Puerto Rican women, for example, have been rendered invisible in a discourse whose explicit agenda is to expose ideological erasure. Chicana readings of color blindness instead of color consciousness in "politically correct" feminist essays indicate the extent to which the issues of race and ethnicity are ignored in feminist and Marxist theories. Theorists such as Rosaura Sanchez, Alma Gomez, Cherrie Moraga, Mariana Romo-Carmona, Gloria Anzaldua, and Helena Maria Viramontes, working collectively as in *Cuentos* (Gomez, Moraga, and RomoCarmona, 1983) and individually as in *Borderlands* (Anzaldua 1987), insist on illuminating the complications and intersections of the multiple systems of exploitation: capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy

As Chicanas making our works public—publishing in marginalized journals and small, underfinanced presses and taking part in conferences and workshops—we realize that the "sisterhood" called feminism professes an ideology that at times comes dangerously close to the phallogocentric ideologies of the white male power structure against which feminists struggle. In her essay, "Ethnicity, Ideology, and Academia," Rosaura Sanchez reminds us of the ideological strategies that the dominant culture manipulates in order to mystify "the relation between minority cultures and the dominant culture" (1987,801). She points out that U.S. cultural imperialism extends beyond the geopolitical borders of the country, "but being affected, influenced, and exploited by a culture is one thing and sharing fully in that culture is another" (1987,81). If we extend the analogy to feminism and the totalizing concept of sisterhood, we begin to understand how the specific interests of Anglo-American and other European feminists tend to erase the existence of Chicana, Puerto Rican, Native American, Asian-American, and other Third World feminisms. Indeed, feminism affects and influences Chicana writers and critics, but feminism as practiced by women of the hegemonic culture oppresses and exploits

the Chicana in both subtle and obvious ways.

When white feminists begin to categorize the different types of feminisms, we in turn can begin to trace the muting of issues of race and ethnicity under other feminist priorities. Elaine Showalter in *A Literature of Their Own* charts the "stages" of writing by women into the categories of (204) "feminine, feminist, and female" (1977, 131). She first establishes that all "literary subcultures, such as black, Jewish, Canadian, Anglo- Indian, or even American," go through phases of imitation, internalization, protest, and finally self-discovery (1977, 131). In addition to the misrepresentation of what "literary subcultures" write, Showalter creates an ethnocentric, Eurocentric, middle-class history of women's writing.

Her penchant for creating literary history, however, does not stop with British women. In "The Feminist Critical Revolution," she again maps out "phases," this time of feminist criticism (1985). Feminist criticism, in Showalter's program, progresses from critiques of sexist texts by men, to the rediscovery of the female literary tradition, then finally, and presumably most advanced, to the revision of literary theories to take into account women's own interpretations, a type of essentialism that assumes the universality of Woman's experience. When we look at a Chicana literary project like Helena Maria Viramontes's "The Cariboo Cafe" (1985), published at the same historical moment as Showalter's essay, however, we can see how her model does not contain Chicana writers or our agendas.

Liberal, Anglo-American feminists are not alone in the recreation and representation (colonization) of women's literary history. In "Women's Time" (1981) Julia Kristeva also defines the phases of feminism. Sounding alarmingly like a version of racist anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan's (1877) categories of savagery, barbarism, and civilization, which structure the evolution of societies, Kristeva sets up her own hierarchies. The most "primitive" would be the position that women in the United States would call liberal feminism. While not denying the political importance of this phase, the struggle for universal suffrage, equal pay for equal work, abortion rights, and so on, Kristeva nonetheless sees the limits of this ahistorical, universalist, globalizing stage. Next on the evolutionary scale is the radical feminist phase, a reductive, essentialist feminism where women "demand recognition of an

irreducible identity, without equal in opposite sex and, as such, exploded, plural, fluid" (1981, 191). A mixture of these two feminisms, Kristeva explains, constitutes the dominant European feminism. For Kristeva it is the final "signifying space" that she privileges. Sounding extremely premature in her optimism that there has been a real change in sexist institutions of power, she is ready to abandon "the very dichotomy man/woman as an opposition between two rival entities" (1981, 331). This dichotomy, she claims, belongs to the metaphysical. "What can 'identity,' even 'sexual identity,' mean in a new theoretical and scientific space where the very notion of identity is challenged?" (1981, 33-34).

While the first three categories Kristeva outlines are defined politically, the category she advocates for herself is dangerously apolitical as well as (205) ahistorical. Even if we accept that Kristeva specifies European feminisms, her own category assumes a universalist privilege. Nowhere in Kristeva's essay do we get a sense that she even considers women of color in her theories.

Toril Moi, in a text that unfortunately is beginning to be used as the textbook for introductory feminist theory courses, polarizes Anglo-American feminism against European feminism. She goes to great lengths to critique various Anglo-American feminists, often citing that they have not gone far enough in their politics: "The central paradox of Anglo-American feminist criticism is thus that despite its often strong, explicit political engagement, it is in the end not quite political enough; not in the sense that it fails to go far enough along the political spectrum, but in the sense that its radical analysis of sexual politics still remains entangled with depoliticizing theoretical paradigms" (1985, 87-88). Only one paragraph earlier, however, Moi has just issued an apologia for omitting "black or lesbian (or black-lesbian) feminist criticism in America" (1985, 87). Not only does she assume that she can conflate the concerns of all women of color in the United States as "black" or "lesbian" or a reductionist combination of the two, but she continues to show her bias against non-European feminist theory by stating that "in so far as textual theory is concerned there is no discernible difference between these three fields [Anglo-American, black, and lesbian criticism]" (1985, 86). After homogenizing all women of color as black and/or lesbian, and doing it all in a single paragraph, Moi takes this opportunity to further chastise Anglo-American, heterosexual,

middleclass women who have made their own concerns universal. Moi's own neglect of race or ethnic specificity in the United States mirrors the way that white supremacy institutes its racist ideology. Clearly, Chicana feminists cannot look to their Eurocentric "sister" for discussions of our specific positions.

In our search for a feminist critical discourse that adequately takes into account our position as women under multiple oppressions we must turn to our own "organic intellectuals." But because our work has been ignored by the men and women in charge of the modes of cultural production, we must be innovative in our search. Hegemony has so constructed the Idea of method and theory that often we cannot recognize anything that is different from what the dominant discourse constructs. We have to look in nontraditional places for our theories: in the prefaces to anthologies, in the interstices of autobiographies, in our cultural artifacts, our cuentos, and if we are fortunate to have access to a good library, in the essays published in marginalized journals not widely distributed by the dominant institutions. While Chicana academics do publish feminist essays in journals such as *Critica*, (206) *The Americas Review* (formerly *Revista Chicano-Riquelma*), and *Third Woman*, I will focus on one specific type of Chicana feminism that deconstructs the borders erected by Eurocentric feminism

The prefatory testimonio to *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas* (1983)—collectively written by the editors Alma Gómez, Cherrie Moraga, and Mariana Romo-Carmona—offers such a site of radical Chicana and Latina theory. The editors identify themselves as "U.S. Third World women," writers who want to break the tradition of silence imposed upon them by the pressures of the dominant culture which works against the viability of an oral tradition. The realities of women of color under capitalism in the United States urge the Latina woman to write. The material realities of life in the urban barrio or ghetto cannot sustain, in the authors' words, "a tradition which relies so heavily on close family networks and is dependent upon generations of people living in the same town or barrio" (1983, vii).

The Gómez, Moraga, and Romo-Carmona project explodes all of Showalter's assumptions about women's writing. As women whose daily existence confronts institutionalized racism, class exploitation, sexism, and homophobia, the U.S. Third

World woman does not enjoy the luxury to privilege one oppression over another. While recognizing that Latinos are not a homogeneous group, the editors acknowledge that "as Latinas in the U.S., our experience is different [from that of white people!]. Because living here means throwing in our lot with other people of color" (1983, X). Unlike Anglo-American and European feminists, Gomez, Moraga, and RomoCarmona reject Eurocentrism and "claim 'la mezcla,' 'la mestiza,' regardless of each author's degree of indio, africano, or european blood" (1983, x)

While Showalter's model insists that the first stage of feminist criticism looks back to find a literary tradition, the collaborators of *Cuentos* believe that in order to forge a new affiliation among working-class people of color in the United States who share a kinship of exploitation, looking to a romanticized past is a luxury in which we cannot indulge. Instead, the stories they present are tied to the specific historical imperatives of the woman of color.

By the time Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa each writes her own foreword to the second edition of their breakthrough anthology, *This Bridge Called My Back* (1983), their feminism on the border, or bridge feminism, can issue a full-fledged manifesto for their brand of radical feminism. Moraga also begins to bridge the chasm between radical women and oppressed men, acknowledging that if the volume were written in 1983 rather than in the original 1979, "it would speak much more directly now to the relations between women and men of color, both gay and heterosexual" (Moraga foreword to the second edition, n.p. 1). In the four years between editions she (206) envisions a more internationalist *Bridge* that would affirm the connections between U.S. people of color and other "refugees of a world on fire."

As Moraga elaborates her feminist agenda, the many ways in which this feminism differs from the Showalter, Moi, and Kristeva versions of feminism become clear. The Chicana feminist does not present "signifying spaces," but material geopolitical issues that redirect feminist discourse. No longer limiting the feminist agenda to issues of race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, Moraga expresses solidarity with the Third World people struggling against the hegemony of the United States. The issues that Moraga presents in 1983 remain urgent in 1988:

The U.S. is training troops in Honduras to overthrow the Nicaraguan people's government.

Human rights violations . . . on a massive scale in Guatemala and El Salvador (and as in this country those most hard-hit are often the indigenous peoples of those lands).

Pinochet escalates political repression in Chile. The U.S. invades Grenada.

Apartheid continues to bleed South Africa.

Thousands of unarmed people are slaughtered in Beirut by Christian militia men and Israeli soldiers.

Aquino is assassinated by the Philippine government.

And the U.S.² The Reagan administration daily drains us of nearly every political gain made by the feminist, Third World, and anti-war work of the late 60's and early 70's. (Moraga, foreword to the second edition, n.p.~

In the same way that we must break with traditional "hegemonic) concepts of genre to read Chicana feminist theory, working-class women of color in other Third World countries articulate their feminisms in nontraditional ways and forms. The Chicana feminist acknowledges the often vast historical, class, racial, and ethnic differences among women living on the border, but the nature of hegemony practiced by the united powers of patriarchy, capitalism, imperialism, and white supremacy promotes an illusion of an irreconcilable split between feminists confined within national borders. We must examine and question the First versus Third World dichotomy before we accept the opposition as an inevitable fissure that separates women politically committed in different ways from any common cause.

In her testimony, *Let Me Speak* (1978), Bolivian activist Domitila Barrios de Chungara acknowledges the separation between "First" and "Third World feminists:

"Our Position is not like the feminists' position. We think (208) our liberation consists primarily in our country being freed forever from the yoke of imperialism and we want a worker like us to be in power and that the laws, education, everything, be controlled by this person. Then, yes, we'll have better conditions for reaching a complete liberation, including a liberation as women" [Barrios 1978, 41]. Her statement, however, is problematized by her occasion for speaking. As a participant at the UN-sponsored International Year of the Woman Conference held in Mexico City in 1975, Barrios witnessed co-optation of "feminism" by governments which use women and women's issues to promote their own political agendas. Barrios observed Imelda Marcos, Princess Ashraf Pahlavi, and Jihan Sadat as some of the conference's "official" Third World representatives. We begin to reformulate the dichotomy when we no longer choose to see these representatives as "Third World feminists," but as agents of their respective governments: agents of patriarchy, capitalism, and imperialism. Suddenly the First World/Third World dichotomy emerges as the arena where the split between the ruling class and the working class, between those in power and the disenfranchised, is exposed.

When Barrios disassociates herself from "feminism," she means feminism as defined by women and men of the dominant class. In the paragraph immediately following the one cited above, Barrios speaks as a workingclass, socialist-feminist, affiliating herself with border feminists like Moraga and Anzaldúa. Unlike feminists whose political considerations must take into account their positions in an academic institution, Moraga, Anzaldúa, and Barrios consider themselves community activists first and, in the case of Moraga and Anzaldúa, academics second. Indeed, the tension between academic and community pressures erupts in Anzaldúa's own text, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), in a mixture of autobiography, poetry, identity politics, and academic footnotes.

Barrios, for her part, speaks as the union organizer of the Bolivian tin miner's wives, the Housewife Committee of Siglo XX. "For us," she asserts,

the important thing is the participation of the *companero* and the *companera* together . . . if women continue only to worry about the house and remain ignorant of the other parts of our reality, we'll never have citizens who'll be

able to lead our country.... And if we think of the central role played by women as the mothers who have to forge future citizens, then, if they aren't prepared they'll only forge mediocre citizens who are easily manipulated by the capitalist, by the boss. (1978, 41)

While she echoes the rhetorical strategy of the nineteenth-century U.S. feminist, Margaret Fuller (1845), who also argued that women be given equal education in order to teach the children, what to Fuller may have been (209) a conscious rhetorical strategy is to Barrios a cultural imperative as a working-class woman in Bolivia.

If Barrios's point of reference is that of a heterosexual woman who does not question woman's role as mother, we must remember her historical context as a working-class woman in Bolivia, the poorest country in South America. History forces her to accept her position as primary nurturer, as the one who will teach the children about the struggle. History, however, also forces her to act in untraditional ways that ultimately place her in the middle of social and political involvement and in the hands of the Bolivian torturers. Considering the historical and economic realities of Barrios's position as a Bolivian woman, her own discourse echoes Moraga's internationalist agenda:

We know there's a long struggle ahead, but that's what we're all about. And we aren't alone. How many peoples are in the same struggle! And, why not say it? Every people needs the solidarity of others, like us, because our fight is big. So we have to practice proletarian internationalism that many people have sung about, and many countries have followed. Many other countries suffer persecutions, outrages, murders, massacres, like Bolivia. | (1978, 42)

While the publication date of Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1977) coincides with Barrios's experiences at the Woman's Year Conference in 1975, the two women's concerns and contexts allow for little else in common. Likewise, Kristeva's deconstruction of the metaphysical constitution of masculine and feminine offer few solutions to the issues that concern women like Barrios and the other border feminists. Moi's admitted ignorance of the existence of any other marginalized women in the United States speaks for itself. MacKinnon's pledge to

accept her premises as "simply wrong" if they do not apply to racial complications at least places her feminism closer to that of Barrios, Anzaldúa, Moraga, Gómez, and Romo-Carmona.

But what is "border feminism," which I have begun to use to specify as a type of Chicana feminism? Is it a new discursive practice or methodology that would legitimize the specificity of Chicana/black/lesbian . . . feminisms in Moi's eyes? Or is it simply a rearticulation of Anglo-American feminism with the added twist of color consciousness?

In *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) Gloria Anzaldúa examines the dynamics of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Whereas Barrios's historical context does not permit her to recognize lesbian issues as valid political concerns, women like Anzaldúa insist on complicating what at first appear as simple, clear-cut issues. For Anzaldúa feminism emerges as (210) the force that gives voice to her origins as "the new mestiza." This "new mestiza" is a woman alienated from her own, often homophobic culture, as well as from the hegemonic culture. She envisions the new mestiza "caught between los intersticios, the spaces between the different worlds she inhabits" (1987, 20). If compañeras like Barrios cannot allow themselves the luxury of bourgeois feminism, a possible alternative is this "bridge feminism" that deconstructs geopolitical boundaries. Anzaldúa's "feminism on the border" begins to do just that. It is a feminism that exists in a borderland not limited to geographic space, a feminism that resides in a space not acknowledged by hegemonic culture. Its inhabitants are what Anzaldúa calls "Los atravesados . . . : squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half-dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the 'normal'" (1987, 3). By invoking racist, homophobic epithets, Anzaldúa explodes the power that the dominant culture holds over what is "normal" or acceptable.

Whereas the earlier works of women like Angela de Hoyos articulate Tejana feminist issues, Anzaldúa makes the leap from the history of colonization by the United States to the history of colonization as a mestiza, a Native American woman. And although some Chicana critics reject the internal colony model because, as Maria Linda Apodaca states, "when the land was conquered the Mexican population

in the Southwest was small given the total land mass" (1986, IIO), the specific history of the Tejano/ Tejana urges us to remember that there is not one single Chicano/Chicana experience in the United States. Apodaca's assumptions neglect to acknowledge historical specificity of the Tejanas/Tejanos who were forced to live under a reign of terror in post-1840s Texas.

In the poem "Hermano," Angela de Hoyos taunts the Anglo usurper by reminding him of his own immigrant status. He is told to "scare up your little 'Flor de Mayo'— / so we can all sail back / to where we came from" (1975, 13, emphasis added). While De Hoyos identifies with her European heritage, the Pinta, the Nina, and the Santa Maria of the Spanish conquerors, Anzaldua, in opposition, insists on identifying with the indigenous Indian tribes as well as with the African slaves who mixed with the conquerors resulting in the mestizo. She bases her political, feminist position on the Chicana's history within multiple cultures: indigenous Mexican, African, and always "grounded on the Indian woman's history of resistance" (1987, 21).

Anzaldua's text is itself a *mestizaje*: a postmodernist mixture of autobiography, historical document, and poetry collection. Like the people whose lives it chronicles, *Borderlands* resists genre boundaries as well as geopolitical borders. The text's opening epigraph is an excerpt from a song (211) by the norteno conjunto band, Los Tigres del Norte. But if Anzaldua's historical ties are closer to the corrido tradition than to the historical imperatives of postmodern theory hers is the new corrido of the mestiza with a political analysis of what it means to live as a woman in a literal and figurative Borderland. She tells us that "The U.S.-Mexican border es una herida abierta (is an open wound) where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture" (3~). Through issues of gender politics Anzaldua locates personal history within a history of the border people. Legitimacy belongs to the Anglo hegemony, the indigenous population is nothing more than an aberrant species. To the white power structure the *mojado* (wetback) is the same as the *mexicano de este lado* (Mexican from the U.S. side). As she chronicles the history of the new mestiza, Anzaldua explores issues of gender and sexual orientation that Chicano historians like David Montejano, Arnoldo De Leon, and Rodolfo Acuna have not adequately addressed. Presenting this other history of

Texas that Anglo-Texans like J. Frank Dobie (1936) and Walter Prescott Webb (1930s) never mention, Anzaldúa further merges autobiography with historical document. Her family history becomes the history of the Chicana/o experience in south Texas after colonization and occupation by U.S. forces. Those who dared resist were lynched by the Texas Rangers. "My grandmother," Anzaldúa informs us, "lost all her cattle / they stole her land" (81). The history of dispossession is transmitted orally from one generation to the next; Anzaldúa's mother tells the story of her widowed mother who was cheated by the Anglo usurper: "A smart gabacho lawyer took the land away mama hadn't paid taxes. No hablaba ingles, she didn't know how to ask for time to raise the money" 181.

Autobiography for the new mestiza is the history of the colonization of indigenous Southwestern peoples by Anglo-American imperialists intent on their manifest destiny. Texas history, in Anzaldúa's revision, is incomplete without the presentation of the Mexican woman who dares to cross the border. She is the one who is the most easily exploited, physically as well as sexually. The coyote can enslave her after raping her. If she is lucky enough to make it to the U.S. side, she can look forward to laboring as a maid "for as little as \$15 dollars a week" (121).

Once she establishes a working definition of the mestizo border culture with which she identifies, Anzaldúa begins her internal critique of that world. Because she is so much a part of this world, she can penetrate its inner dynamics and understand the oppressions that it in turn uses to control women within the culture. When Anzaldúa tells us how she rebelled, we can see the intense power that the Chicano culture holds over (212) women: "Repele, Hable pa' 'tras. Fui muy hocicona. Era indiferente a muchos valores de mi cultura. No me deje de los hombres. No fui buena ni obediente" jí argued. I talked back. I was quite a bigmouth. I was indifferent to many of my culture's values. I did not let the men push me around. I was not good nor obedient [115, my translation]. The ideal woman for the people of the borderland is one who stands behind her man in silence and passivity. If she refuses her female role as housekeeper, she is considered "lazy." To study, read, paint, write are not legitimate choices for the mestiza. Her testimony rings true for many Chicanas who struggle against their gender indoctrination. That her history exists for us to study is a testament to her resistance: "Every bit of self-faith I'd

painstakingly gathered took a beating daily. Nothing in my culture approved of me. Habia agarrado malos pasos [I had taken the wrong path]. Something was 'wrong' with me. Estaba mas alla de la tradicion [I was beyond the tradition!]" (I 6, my translation].

"Cultural tyranny" for the Chicana feminist imposes an additional hegemonic power against which she must struggle. She must not only contend with the racism of the dominant Anglo-American restraints, she must also resist the oppressive yoke of the sexist Chicano culture:

Culture is made by those in power—men. Males make the rules and laws; women transmit them. How many times have I heard mothers and mothers-in-law tell their sons to beat their wives for not obeying them, for being hociconas (big mouths), for being callejeras (going to visit and gossip with neighbors), for expecting their husbands to help with the rearing of children and the housework, for wanting to be something other than housewives?" (161

Anzaldua's gender politics are always aware of the women who are agents of the patriarchy.

In addition, Anzaldua understands that for the new mestiza an education is imperative for liberation. But the realities of living in a borderland, a muted culture in the midst of the hegemonic power of the United States, the chances are slim that a Chicana will survive the battle against the combined forces of a sexist Chicano culture and the racist power of the dominant culture. Furthermore, economic exploitation ensures that Chicanas stay in their place because "as working class people our chief activity is to put food in our mouths, a roof over our heads and clothes on our backs"(171.

Anzaldua's project problematizes further still the traditions of Chicanismo, when, as a lesbian Chicana, she forces the homophobes of the Chicano community to see their prejudice. If the heterosexual Chicana is ostracized from her culture for transgressing its rules of behavior, for the (213) Chicana lesbian "the ultimate

rebellion she can make against her native culture is through her sexual behavior" (19). She makes the "choice to be queer" and as a result feels the ultimate exile from her homeland, cultural as well as geographic. She transforms the bourgeois concept of "safety" and "home" to concepts she can carry with her along with her political commitments. As a Chicana "totally immersed" in her culture, she can choose to reject the crippling aspects of traditions that oppress women and silence homosexual men and women. Her refusal to "glorify those aspects of my culture which have injured me and which have injured me in the name of protecting me" signals the agenda for the new mestiza, the border feminist (~). The border feminist that Anzaldúa presents is a woman comfortable with new affiliations that subvert old ways of being, rejecting the homophobic, sexist, racist, imperialist, and nationalist.

In addition to gender transgressions that Anzaldúa's new mestiza introduces, new subject matter for poetry is another "aberration" that the Chicana feminist presents. African-Americanists from Ida B. Wells (1969) to Hazel Carby (1985) and Wahneema Lubiano (1987) have explored the terroristic method by which the dominant culture kept the black people under control: the law of the rope. Likewise, Chicanos, particularly in Texas, have lived under the threat of lynching. But while historian Arnoldo De Leon investigates lynching as an institutionalized threat against Tejanos, it takes Anzaldúa's poem, "We Call Them Greasers," to flesh out the ramifications of the lynch law to Chicanas. In the poem whose title pays tribute to De Leon's history, *They Called Them Greasers* (1983), the connection between the history of oppression of nineteenth-century African slaves and exslaves and nineteenth-century mestizos/Chicanos emerges. Narrated by the Anglo-American usurper, this example of what Barbara Harlow (1987) has called resistance poetry speaks of how tejanos lost their lands and often their lives. The Anglo narrator assumes the role of deity as he forces the Tejanos to place their hats "over their hearts" and lower their eyes in his presence. He rejects their collective farming techniques, cultural remnants of indigenous tribal traditions of the mestizo. He sneers, "they didn't even own the land but shared it." The Tejano "troublemakers" who actually have "land grants and appeal to the courts" are called laughingstocks, "them not even knowing English" (134). For the Anglo-American imperialist literacy in Spanish or any other nonstatus language is by their definition illiteracy. The

women, in particular, suffer an additional violence before they are murdered by the gringo.

While Chicano (male) historians have done much to expose the realities of violent acts against the Tejanos, they have, to a great extent, been reluctant to voice the perhaps unspeakable violence against Tejanas. Even (214) Americo Paredes in his breakthrough text, "With His Pistol in His Hand" (1958), cannot articulate the violence that Gregorio Cortez's wife, Leonor Diaz Cortez, must have suffered in the four months that she spent in a Texas jail, incarcerated for her husband's alleged crime (87~. During the Ranger's manhunt for Cortez, a Mexican woman is alleged to have given information to the sheriff leading to Cortez's capture. Paredes states: "The woman, whoever she was, at first refused to talk, but 'under pressure' told Glover where Cortez was going... What sort of pressure Glover used, whether it was physical or psychological, there is no way of telling" (1958, 68). Precisely because "there is no way" for a male historian to tell the history of the Chicana, it takes Anzaldua's voice to articulate the violence against nineteenth-century Tejanas. In "We Call Them Greasers" she finds the words that acknowledge the history of violence against the Tejana. This history includes rape as institutionalized strategy in the war to disempower Chicano men. While the Tejano is tied to a mesquite tree, the Chicano version of the African-American hanging tree, the gringo rapes the Tejana.

She lay under me whimpering. I plowed into her hard kept thrusting and thrusting felt him watching from the mesquite tree heard him keening like a wild animal in that instant I felt such contempt for her round face and beady black eyes like an Indian's. Afterwards I sat on her face until her arms stopped flailing, didn't want to waste a bullet on her. The boys wouldn't look me in the eyes. I walked up to where I had tied her man to the tree and spat in his face. Lynch him, I told the boys. (134-35) poetry(

Once the rapist gains total control over the Tejano through the violation of his woman, the rapist can feel only contempt for her. Within the hierarchy of powerlessness the woman occupies a position below the already inferior brown man. While De Ledn chronicles how Anglo- American occupiers made their

conquests and massacres more bearable by comparing their victims to animals, similarly, by emphasizing the mestiza's "Indian" features, the Anglo-American imperialist further relegates the Chicana to the savagery of the Indian (1983, 14-23). Anzaldua's reluctance to condemn the passive observers, "the boys," in the poem is not because of a misguided loyalty to the gringo, but an implicit recognition of the power of the class (215) structure even in nineteenth-century Texas where the rich land barons controlled all their workers, regardless of race or ethnicity.

In poems like "sus plumas el viento," "Culturas," and "sobre piedras con lagartijos," Anzaldua reasserts her solidarity with the exploited men and women along the border. "El sonavabitch" protests the exploitation of undocumented farm workers in places like Muncie, Indiana. Her poetry exposes the methods by which unscrupulous farmers create a modern-day slave system. Hiring undocumented Mexican laborers to work their fields, they tip off the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) for a raid before pay day. The Chicano narrator expresses solidarity with his undocumented compañeros when he refuses to work for the sonavabitch who has used the INS tactic "three times since we've been coming here / Sepa dios [God knows] how many times in between. / Wets, free labor, esclavos [slaves]. / Pobres hijos de la chingada [Poor sons of whores]. / This is the last time we work for trim / no master how fregados [desperate! we are]" (126-27, my translation).

Finally, it is in the poem "To live in the Borderlands Means You" that Anzaldua sums up her definition of the new mestiza, the feminist on the border. She is one who "carries five races" on her back, not Hispanic, Indian, black, Spanish, or Anglo, but the mixture of the five which results in the mestiza, mulata. She's also "a new gender," "both woman and man, neither" (1941). While not rejecting any part of herself, Anzaldua's new mestiza becomes a survivor because of her ability to "live sin fronteras "without borders! / be a crossroads" (195).

While Anzaldua transgresses aesthetic boundaries in her text, transgresses gender boundaries in her "choice" to be a lesbian, transgresses ethnicity and race in her formulation of the new mestiza combining Native American, Spanish, African, and even Anglo "blood" to form a mestizaje, her project is nonetheless articulated within

the vital history of the Texas Chicana. If history is what forces Anzaldua's escape into what Jenny Bourne (1987) has called "identity politics" in her essay, "Homelands of the Mind," it is because the only history for the Chicana is the history of the mestiza's colonization by both the Spanish conquerors and the Anglo-American imperialists in their conquest of south Texas. Once Anzaldua establishes a history of the border people who "were jerked out by the roots, truncated, disemboweled, dispossessed, and separated from their identity and [their] history," (8) the Chicana feminist can turn to other concerns. Patricia Fernandez-Kelly's *For We Are Sold, I and My People* (1983) presents a history of the mestiza laboring in the exploitative maquiladora (factory) system that Anzaldua alludes to in her own work. In addition, Anzaldua calls attention to the unwritten history of the mestizas in the colonial (216) south Texas and the border cities like El Paso and Ciudad Juarez, homelands of contemporary victims of U.S. multinational corporations. These people are being poisoned by the water they are forced to store in chemical drums that once held carcinogens. (Austin American Statesman, 27 March 1988).

The Chicana feminist's theory and methodology are ideological analysis, materialist, historical research, as well as race, class, and gender analysis. It is never an ahistorical "politics of equal oppressions" (Bourne 1987, 16) because Chicana feminism develops from an awareness of specific material experience of the historical moment. Unlike the feminism of sisterhood, "feminism which is separatist, individualistic and inward-looking" (Bourne 1987, 2), Chicana feminists look "inward" in moments of self-exploration and see themselves as daughters of non-Western, indigenous tribes. Anzaldua's feminist discourse leads her to look inward only for a deeper understanding of a larger erased history.

Anzaldua's text can be seen as a bridge that forms a continuum between her collaboration with Moraga in *This Bridge Called My Back* (1983) and Helena Maria Viramontes's "The Cariboo Cafe" in her collection, *The Moths and Other Stories* (1985). One of the Chicana contributors to the *Cuentos* anthology (Gómez, Moraga and Romo-Carmona 1983), Viramontes continues the internationalist connection with women in Latin America and other Third World countries. If Anzaldua's anti-hegemonic strategy is to recreate border history for the mestiza, in "The Cariboo

Cafe" Viramontes's strategy is to expose the extent of the political power of the United States. Viramontes presents the oppression of the reserve army of laborers that the United States creates and then designates as "other," the "illegal" immigrants. In this story Viramontes shows us that we can combine feminism with race and class consciousness, even if we recognize the fallacies of an all-encompassing "sisterhood." In this Chicana political discourse Viramontes commits herself to a transnational solidarity with other working-class people who like all nonindigenous tribes are immigrants to the United States. In *The Political Unconscious* Fredric Jameson has said that "history is what hurts" (1981, 102). For the most recent wave of brown immigrants who come to the United States in search of political freedom, the pain intensifies when they realize that for the brown, black, and Asian races, the suppressed history of the United States is the history of exploitation as well as racism.

"They arrived in the secrecy of night, as displaced people often do, stopping over for a week, a month, eventually staying a lifetime" (Viramontes 1985, 61). So Viramontes begins her history of the displaced immigrants of the eighties. They are the "illegal aliens," the racist label by which the U.S. government designates an exploited subculture it has created. As (217) James Cockcroft asks: "if so many employers and all consumers depend so heavily on these people, then why is it that they are viewed as a "problem" or as "illegals"? Human beings can do illegal things, but can a human being actually be illegal? Moreover, since when under capitalism is it an illegal act to sell one's labor power for a low wage to an employer engaged in a socially approved business?" (Cockcroft 1986, 64~.

In "The Cariboo Cafe" Viramontes interweaves narrative voices to give the history of the undocumented worker in the United States. Viramontes gives the story of the killing of an undocumented female worker wider political significance in the heteroglossic versions (see Bakhtin 1981, 263) of life at the borders, at the periphery of North American society.

The Cariboo Cafe is the center around which Viramontes constructs her revision of history. The cafe, a sleazy diner on the wrong side of the tracks, attracts the outcasts of late capitalism. Burned-out drug addicts, prostitutes, and undocumented workers

frequent the place run by a petty bourgeois man who becomes the mouthpiece of the dominant society. While his speech places him in the working class, he spouts the ideology of the dominant class. What to him are unexamined platitudes, "family gotta be together" (73), are for outsiders like the undocumented workers ideologically charged, an ideology that Viramontes resists and unmasks in her tale. Viramontes transforms this cynical short-order cook with a grease-stained apron into a grotesque Uncle Sam, a living contradiction of core and periphery. The great irony here is that this man is almost as much a victim of the capitalist system as are the undocumented workers. If the new immigrants are exploited by capital as they labor in the sweatshops of the garment warehouses, this Anglo-American has been similarly victimized by the imperialistic urges of a U.S. government that led the country into a war in Southeast Asia. We learn that the man's only son is dead; it still haunts him that he will never know "what part of Vietnam JoJo is all crumbled up in" (173)

The owner of what the workers call the "zero zero place" is able to voice the dominant ideology not because of a class privilege, but because of his privilege as a white man. It is here that Viramontes exposes how the hegemonic forces of race, class, and gender intersect and collide. When she gives equal weight to the voices of the young daughter of undocumented workers and to a Salvadoran political refugee, Viramontes gives voice to the counterhegemonic.

The first voice we hear in the story is that of Sonya; we see the urban landscape through her eyes. Both her parents work so that the family may one day have a "toilet [of] one's own." For the feminist reader this turn of phrase resonates of Virginia Woolf's desire for financial independence for (218) the woman writer, but it also reminds us of the vast difference between the concerns of bourgeois feminists and border feminists. Sonya is a latchkey child whose duties as a female include caring for her younger brother, Macky. The children lose the key to their apartment and get lost trying to find their way to safety. A premise for survival in hostile territory for these children is never to trust the police; the "poke" is "La Migra in disguise and thus should always be avoided" (61). Lost, the children see "a room with a yellow glow, like a beacon light at the end of a dark sea" which Sonya thinks will be a sanctuary from the alleys and the dead ends of the urban barrio. Ironically,

the beacon is the "zero, zero place" (64~.

In the "double zero cafe" we hear the story of the children's fate in flashback. The cafe owner tells his version as if he were on trial. Indeed, Viramontes is putting U.S. immigration policies and ideology on trial. The man constantly presents himself as honest, yet in the same breath he admits to lacing his hamburgers with something that is "not pure beef." He thinks that he redeems himself when he proclaims, at least "it ain't dogmeat" t641. The he remembers the basic contradiction of the "American" ideal: "It never pays to be honest." He continues his version of how it came to be that a Salvadoran refugee was killed in his cafe. When he first saw "that woman," he immediately labeled her as Other: "Already I know that she's bad news because she looks street to me. Round face, burnt toast color, black hair.... Weirdo" j6s). Through his voice we hear the articulation of the dominant race's rationale for excluding brown races from integration into the U.S. society. Because immigrants of different skin color belie the melting-pot myth, it is harder for them to be accepted in the same way that European emigrants have been accepted in the history of U.S. colonization. When the woman speaks Spanish to the children with her, he states: "Right off I know she's illegal, which explains why she looks like a weirdo"l66~. Here Viramontes unmasks how the dominant marginalize on the basis of color and language.

Only when we get the third voice does Viramontes allow us to realize what has happened to the lost children of the first section. They have been taken by a Salvadorena who mistakes Macky for her missing son. This woman is a modern day llorona (the wailing woman of mestizo folklore) who has fled her country after her own child was murdered by the rightwing, U.S.-backed government. The child is one of the countless desaparecidos in those countries whose dictators the U.S. government keeps in power.

The Salvadorena tells her story and, indeed, becomes the modern- day wailing woman; in this version she represents all women who are victimized by conquering races and classes. The Salvadorena represents all (219) women "who come up from the depths of sorrow to search for their children; . . . [she] hear[s] the wailing of the women and know[s] it to be [her] own (68-691. In his essay "On Language as Such

and on the Language of Man," Walter Benjamin argued that the lament "is the most undifferentiated, impotent expression of language; it contains scarcely more than the sensuous breath" II978, 329;. Viramontes uses the lament motif in this story not only to expose the socially sanctioned, passive roles for women within the patriarchy, but to show the powerlessness of the victims of repressive governments, and thus, the lament contains much more than Benjamin would have it contain.

In her abjection the Salvadorena believes Macky is her son. She cares for him and cannot understand why the cafe owner would call her act a kidnapping. For her, as for the children, the police here are no different from the police in the country she has fled. They will take her son away from her. She resists arrest and throws boiling coffee at the man pointing a gun at her forehead. With the Salvadorena's final act of resistance Viramontes explodes the boundaries of family, of safety, and of home.

From Anzaldua's important revision of Texas history to the theoretical proclamations by the collective voices of Moraga, G6mez, and RomoCarmona to Viramontes's questioning the constitution of family, Chicana feminism challenges boundaries defined by the hegemony. When Eurocentric, liberal feminists define "theory" and "methodology," they become part of the hegemonic power that constructs the idea of "method" and "theory"; they cannot recognize racial or ethnic difference. Chicana feminism, both in its theory and method, is tied to the material world. When feminist anthologizers like Toril Moi cannot recognize Chicana theory, it is because Chicanas ask different questions which in turn ask for a reconstruction of the very premises of "theory." Because the history of the Chicana experience in the United States defines our particular mestizaje of feminism, our theory cannot be a replicate of white feminism nor can it be only an academic abstraction. The Chicana feminist looks to her history (to paraphrase Bourne's plea for feminist praxis) to learn how to transform the present. For the Chicana feminist it is through our affiliation with the struggles of other Third World people that we find our theories and our methods . (220)