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“*LA DAIKA: AUTO-TEORÍA*
OF A DYKE(-ISH) TIJUANA
BORDER LESBIAN

Re-claiming the Bad Woman and Re-Making the
Elektra Complex in Chicana Lesbian Literature.”

KENDY RIVERA

For the lesbian of color, the ultimate rebellion she can make against her
native culture is through her sexual behavior

(Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 41).

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I am six-years old, sitting at the edge of the backyard bench of my Tia Rosa's house in San Ysidro, California. Between screens of confetti and flying piñatas, you can oversee our family house in Tijuana from my Tia Rosa's backyard. I am in a different country, yet I can see my house . . . is this magic? Look! That's my house! Right there, *la que esta en el otro lado!* All the other children are slowly descending from the empty and airy polyvinyl castle, but I am still sitting. I sit because I stare at them, two women sensually dancing to the rhythm of calypso. The xylophone dings in my head, and I can't feel my legs. My Tia Rosa's arms are 90-degrees towards the sky, waving left and right. My Tia Rosa snaps her fingers, happily, joyfully, marking the tempo. *Her* hips nestle towards my Tia Rosa's hips. Their hips touch. Their bodies softly caress each other while

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nobody watches. But, I stare, as I am still sitting at the edge of the bench, while the children wait for the second piñata to be broken.

Twenty-one years have passed, and I still lament not being butch lesbian enough, like my Tia Rosa.

The terms, *machorra*, *marimacha*, *chancla*,¹ or anything relating to any female masculinity (read, butch), cringes my thought, vision, and hearing. I want to know more, I want to peek, I want to participate; yet I cannot. Throughout my life, the Tijuana border colloquial qualifier, “*daika*” (adj. 1. Norte de México, del vocablo fronterizo Español proveniente de la palabra en inglés *dyke*, dícese de aquella persona del sexo femenino que se presenta masculina ú hombruna), *machorra*, butch, have provoked an abhorrent (yet attracting) reaction. Like a vicious cycle between hatred and pleasure, an ambivalent love and hate relationship. I hate you because you are *la otra yo que aun no logro ser*. Yet, I desire you, *porque se que también eres quien podría llegar a ser. . . la incongruencia—el auto-odio*. The self-hatred. Is it my attempt to deny or runaway from confronting my own masculinity? Is it that by rejecting anything that is *de daika*, or dyke I am expressing my internalized butchphobia?

BRIDGING CHICANA LESBIAN LITERATURE, THEORY AND AUTO-TEORÍA

In the 2002 essay, “now let us shift . . . the path of *conocimiento* . . . inner work, public arts,” Gloria Anzaldúa re-elaborates the concept of *conocimiento*.² Anzaldúa defines *conocimiento* as that moment in life that “provokes un ‘aja’ . . .” The *ajá*, is an impression “that guides our feet along the path, gives you el ánimo⁴ to dedicate yourself to transforming perceptions of reality, and thus the conditions of life. Llevas la prescencia de este *conocimiento* contigo⁵.” (540) The opening vignette describes the earliest moments of sexual (re) *conocimiento* in my lifetime. As Anzaldúa explains, my intuitive gnosis, untouched by mental constructions “[a] form of spiritual inquiry . . . reached via creative acts—writing, art-making, dancing” (542), allowed me to recognize at the tender age of 6 that I am a woman loving woman. But soon after my sexual-consciousness, came “el arrebato . . . [the] rupture, fragmentation . . . an ending, a beginning” (Anzaldúa, 546). A monstrous and rebel Shadow Beast⁶ lurked into our family’s “good” name when my Tia Rosa declared her

butch lesbian subjectivity. Since my aunt Rosa's coming-out, my gender presentation tamed. What was there to be tamed? I grew up being afraid of what I could become: A butch.

I grew-up with the stereotype of a living, breathing, threatening butch lesbian. Not necessarily afraid to come out of the (sexuality) closet, but the closet of my gender presentation. Too afraid to perform a butch gender identity, I performed an opposite extreme of my gendered self. I went through rigorous transformations, constant makeovers, thousands of dollars spent in make-up and dolled-up sartorial that would prove me non-threatening, non-transgressive: a good woman, a good daughter, a *good lesbian*. In drag, I performed a disjunctured and false gender identity. I want(ed) butchness to be my friends with benefits. But how much longer will I perpetuate this hypocrisy? How do I exchange cowardice for courage? I expose my wounds. As a native of the U.S-Mexico border, I speak from a geographical *herida abierta*: the Tijuana U.S.-Mexico border. As one with a mutilated butch identity, I speak from a sexual *herida abierta*. Anzaldúa's wisdom heals my butchered border body, "Let the wound caused by the serpent be cured by the serpent" (*Borderlands/ La Frontera*, 72).

In the following pages, I will allow for the serpent that bit me with the cultural, heteropatriarchal and homophobic venom, to be the same serpent that will heal my wounds with lesbian words of desire and woman loving woman visions of pleasure. Utilizing Emma Perez's Oedipal Triangle, I will situate three lesbian characters of three distinct Chicana Lesbian novels into a butch continuum in an attempt to breakdown the patriarchal power dependency cycle. By inverting the triangular Oedipal dynamic, I have two investments: the first, to re-place the characters in the Oedipal triangle in alliance with the "Bad Women" (in Gaspar de Alba's terms) of the Oedipal conquest complex moment; and second, to re-claim the transgressive rebellious non-heteronormative woman (and queers) in solidarity an Anzaldúan "nos/otras." Or as Carla Trujillo affirmed in her introduction to *Chicana Lesbians*, "[b]y being lesbians we refuse to need a man to form our own identities as women" (ix).

The overlapping triangular dynamics of sexuality and gender that the anachronistic characters represented cede a diachronic reading through the common themes in the novels. I delineate five shared themes as follows: colonization, heteropatriarchy, violence, family, and

transgressive/non-heteronormative gender. The nepantlera characters that I seek to position together vary in age and are anachronistic, yet, all three of them straddle the nepantla space of *ni de aqui ni de allá*, of gender and sexuality. I will begin with the youngest butch, Carla Trujillo's pre-teen child Marci Cruz from *What Night Brings*. Following with Emma Perez's young adult machito Micaela Campos, from *Forgetting the Alamo, or Blood Memory*. I also chose these writers and their novels because I will be bridging the scholar's writings and concepts with their decolonial imaginary prose.

BREAKING THE OEDIPAL MOMENT IN CHICANA LITERATURE

In "Notes From a Chicana Survivor," Pérez recurs to postmodern Feminist and psychoanalytical approaches to understand power and sexuality dynamics, and attempts to supplement the analyses offered so far based on the Chicana experience. Using Luce Irigaray's feminist critique of male-centered psychoanalysis, Pérez lays-out her counter-arguments against Freud, Lacan, and Foucault, or the "theoretical imbeciles," as she calls them who dismiss women's subjectivity in their understandings of sexuality and power (59). She begins with the Oedipal moment in Freud's theory; that is, when the male child realizes he cannot possess his object of first-love and desire, the mother, as she belongs to the powerful father. The male child's disempowerment and fear to *the man* increases when he discovers that, a) his father possesses a longer and larger penis than his, and b) the mother lacks a penis and that he could potentially lack one as well. The male child will develop a fear of castration due to these two simultaneous revelations, and his fear will also be articulated in the form of an aberration towards the mother/woman for lacking a penis and being the reminding embodiment of castration. Consequently, the male child will concurrently ally and compete with the symbolic figures of power- the penis and the Father.

French Marxist Feminist, Luce Irigaray understands the Oedipus complex to be functioning in all strands of the (social, economic, political, religious) Patriarchal system. It seems that Pérez agrees with Irigaray's analysis of the Oedipus complex, that because the male child is unable to resolve the anxiety created by the love-aberration relationship with the mother/woman, as an adult he will create laws, policing, social stratification, economic distribution of wealth, and ideologies to re-create his

unresolved fear. Irigaray proposes that a possible way a male adult will fictionally resolve the Oedipal anxiety is through “the male gaze.” In other words, his idea or point of view about women as “passive, castrated, and eternally feminine in his eyes. As long as he can ‘gaze,’ as long as his ‘love of looking is satisfied, his domination is secure’” (59).

From this point of departure, Perez is able to fill-in the gaps on the technologies of power and sexuality that operate onto the Chicana body and experience. She will contest Octavio Paz’s understanding of *la Chingada* or *la Malinche* as the indigenous betrayer woman/whore who passively allows her body to be penetrated by the superior white male. For Perez, Paz’s essays in *The Labyrinth of Solitude* reflect his own inferiority complex as he despises his superior White father for choosing an inferior Indigenous woman as his mother, a choice that will condemn him to an eternal state of racial mediocrity. In other words, Paz’s construction of Malintzin is more about his own fear of castration, than the figure of *la Malinche* or Mexicana mestiza and indigenous women itself.

Perez’s critique of Paz’s *Malinche* attempts to rescue female subjectivity and the site of empowerment for *Mexicanas* and Chicanas, whiling offering a Chicana feminist understanding to Paz’s *mestizo/a* inferiority complex and reading of Malintzin. For Perez, the *mestizo* inferiority complex is an exacerbated version of the Oedipal moment, which is aggravated with the violent legacy of colonization and conquest. In other words, the *mestizo* inferiority complex takes place when the White European male power and sexuality clash with the racial and sexual subjugation of the Indigenous woman. The colonized/colonizer dynamic creates a trifold version of the Oedipus complex, as the male *mestizo* bastard fears the castration from his omnipotent Father and the male European colonizer. For Emma Pérez, it becomes clear that Octavio Paz’s reading on *La Malinche* is nothing more than a reflection of his own half-breed bastard complex. And therefore, according to Perez’s analysis of *Paz as the Mexican mestizo* writer, Chicano adults will master the language of the conqueror as a mode of survival, but “his anxiety encompasses not only the fear of castration but also that his power will never match the supreme power of the white man” (62). Thus, and because the Chicano has internalized the Oedipal-complex triangle, he will abhor the betrayer *India*, *la Chingada* and the threat of the Chicana woman. The Chicanos internalization and assimilation into the Oedipal-complex triangle can be exemplified in Luis Valdes’ *Corrido* of *Delgadina*.

The *Corrido* of *Delgadina* analysis serves two discursive functions in the essay. First, is to critique Freud's Electra complex, and secondly, to challenge the law of the Father. For Perez, as well as to Marxist Feminists, the Freudian inverse of the Oedipus complex, Electra, is incomplete, as Freud fails to determine how the female child transfers her love and desire from the mother to the father. Perez argues Freud's masculinist gaze allows him to close-the-transfer-of-first-love-circle for women because of patriarchal law. Instead Pérez poses a rather interesting question based on Freudian psychoanalytical "phallic stage" assumptions, wouldn't the girl's first-love (mother) attraction as an adult manifest woman-to-woman desire or lesbianism? Freud's heteronormative assumptions and male-gaze does not allow him to do a more adequate reasoning for woman-to-woman and male-to-male sexuality. And like Paz, Freud's internalized fear of castration impedes a better explanation for woman's sexuality, and thus, we have had to drink the Electra-complex Kool-Aid.

Another evaluation that arises from the *corrido* is the unquestionable law of the father. The *corrido* also emits the dangers of a woman when she defies the rule of the man: death. But because woman fear ostracization, violence, or death, like in *Delgadina's* case, they must engage in an addictive/dependent cycle "to patriarchy that has ruled them since precise historical moment in which they became aware that women's bodies are sexually desired and/or empowered by a penis" (65). Women, as hostages of patriarchy, engage in a dependent relationship with the penis, akin to a Stockholm syndrome dynamic: the penis is adored, loathed, tamed, feared, defended, manipulated, and seduced. But the object of oppression is never envied, like Freud claims.

In the following paragraphs I want to dedicate my analysis on Perez's proposition of inverting the Elektra complex. That is, by re-directing girl/child desire to the first object of love, the mother/woman, I attempt to rescue the moments in Chicana Lesbian literature that create a nepantla space beyond the heteropatriarchal ruling and closer to a woman-loving-woman place in the imaginary.

MARCI-THE BABY BUTCH

In 2001, twelve years after Carla Trujillo would edit the anthology *Chicana Lesbians*, she published the story of emerging pre-teen baby butch,

Marci Cruz. The writer places the story in the 1960's environment of a working-class Chicano family living in the Bay Area, California. Although this is Trujillo's first fiction novel, the richness she can bring to the narrative developed by a theory of the flesh makes *What Night Brings* such a well-received text among literary groups. Published by Curbstone Press, a non-profit house dedicated in reflecting the cultural and social life of Latina/os in the United States (cbsd.com), the novel was awarded the Miguel Mármol prize, the Paterson Fiction Prize, the Latino Literary Foundation Latino Book Award, the Bronze Medal from Foreword Magazine, and Honorable Mention for the Gustavus Meyers Books Award, and a Lambda Literary Award (goodreads.com).

In between tears, laughter, sarcasm, and naiveté, the narrator—Marci, describes the daily struggles to survive under her father's tyrannical violent ruling, and her simultaneous desire to grow a penis. Along with her faithful sidekick and partner in crime, younger sister Corin and butch boi Marci must unravel and expose carefully their family's dirty secrets: compliance to violence.

Yet, I wish to rescue those moments in the novel that step-away from a phallogocentric ethos, and offer beams (or pillars) to build a woman-loving-woman community of nepantleras straddling the hetero and homo-normative worlds. This task may seem awfully difficult in a novel that centers the story on a tomboy that prays fervently every night asking God (the father) to grant her a penis. In the article "Queer Like a Virgin", Emily Kathryn Anderson quotes Monica Palacios' lines from "Tomboy":

Don't get me wrong, I never wanted to physically be a boy. Although I did try peeing standing up a couple of times-and I did pretend to shave with dad.

I liked my girl body. I just wanted what they had- POWER!

I wished they would have told me sooner. I wished someone would have taken me aside-preferably an angel and said:"The reason you felt like an outsider when you were growing up, the reason you couldn't handle all that Male Sexual Power, the reason you've had all these unexplainable weird feelings for women-is because you were born a lesbian and NOBODY TOLD YOU!" (Anderson, 1)

I incorporate this quote because it echoes Marci's frustrations with patriarchal power, misplaced desire (towards a penis), and realization of a queered sexual identity. In Trujillo's novel, Marci's pre-teen hormones and lesbian desire burst when she meets garden-owning neighbor Raquel, and

discovers what it feels to love a woman in a woman's body: "I didn't want to go to the hospital and have an operation. I didn't even really want a birdy. I just wanted Raquel. Why was everything so hard?" (29). This quote exemplifies how Marci's character does not identify with a trans or queer gender identity, but rather, as a lesbian, baby butch trapped in a world of heteropatriarchy and homophobia, where male phallic privilege is the only desirable privilege. For Marci, the only way to escape from the despotic, macho violent dominion was by adopting an equally masculine presentation that would threaten the father's almighty power:

"Did I tell you that part of the reason why I wanted to be a boy, besides loving girls, was so I could grow big muscles like the men in my Uncle Tommy's muscle magazines? Then, I'd be able to beat up my dad" (15).

Paradoxically, Marci finds in the Catholic Church the strange, odd, abnormal, *queer* community, with whom she comes to teleologically identify:

"Queer:

the church

too much of the church= holy roller

holly roller=queer?

queer nuns=Mother Superior

queer priests=Father Chacón

queer people=Miss Beauchamp

Uncle Tommy called a holy roller

Uncle Tommy called a queer

Father Chacon acting queer

Uncle Tommy and Father Chacón in the same

Confessional booth=queer

Uncle Tommy hitting Eddie hard when he called him a queer

Queer=something bad

Too much church makes you queer, or

You're already queer and it's why you go to church.

The Church is queer.

If the Church is queer, then God must be queer" (135).

Making a connection between Trujillo the theorist/scholar and the novelist, we are able to read parallels between Marci's queering of the Catholic Church and how Chicana Lesbians have re-claimed la Virgen morena. As such, "La Virgen de Guadalupe and a Reconstruction of a Lesbian Desire" highlights how Trujillo ascribes various and alternate

queer meanings to the Catholic motherly patron. For Chicana Lesbians, Trujillo writes, “La Virgen de Guadalupe whom we identify and transform doesn’t become our Virgin. She remains it” (218–227).

MICAELA, THE BURGEONING MACHITO

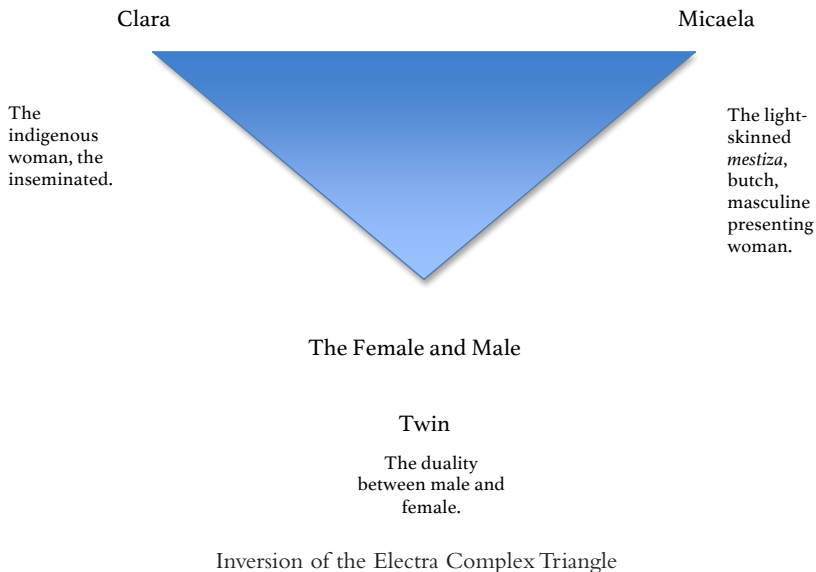
Like Carla Trujillo’s first novel, historian and theorist, Emma Perez debuted as a fiction writer with the first Chicana Lesbian western novel. *Forgetting the Alamo, or Blood Memory* was published in 2009 by the University of Texas Press, and selected as a Lambda Award finalist (lambdaliterary.org). The story is centered on Micaela Campos; a teenage, young adult butch that leaves her home in San Jacinto seeking vengeance for her family’s murders in the harsh, violent, brown land of Tejas, a doubly colonized world of European imperialism and White Anglo-Saxon Manifest Destiny. The novel’s narrative follows the distribution of “Notes From A Chicana Survivor”: 1) re-evaluation of the Oedipal moment; 2) “molestation memory,” where girl realize they have null sociocultural power in relation to men; and 3) asserting female power through *los sitios y las lenguas* (162). But most importantly, what the novel narrates is the journey of a Chicana Lesbian trying to navigate heteropatriarchal rule, and finding her agency in between the caveats of the decolonized spaces; these are women-created, safe spaces where women are free to behave, live and thrive outside the male norm—brothel, the frontier, and woman-loving-woman relationships.

Although Micaela leaves San Jacinto trying to follow her father’s footsteps and empower herself through a masculinist presentation and performance, she soon finds in her journey that men cannot tolerate the presence of anything outside macho masculinity. Micaela performs masculine behavior, adopts a male attitude, and fights, murders, and seeks vengeance man-to-man. Despite being surrounded by *too* much male-ness, Micaela finds her love: a mulata woman called Clara, with whom she has a torrid and intense lesbian relationship.

Returning to the Oedipal moment, we witness how Micaela aligns herself with the father for multiple reasons: one, she understands that even if she “[e]s un machito . . . and was more like a son and less of a daughter” (11), following Freudian thinking, she is understood, treated, placed on a second-plane, as deficient among men. For example, Micaela’s relationship with her bastard cousin, Jed, is one of antagonism, fear and loathing. Yet, because patriarchy has ruled Micaela and her mother’s life, she feels

betrayed when she discovers her mother having an affair with Barrera. This betrayal motivates Micaela's self-exile from home and in turn, her journey to the southwest American frontier. But even in the desert planes, mountainous journeys, and multiple male spaces that Micaela encounters (and conquers) she is still *not* quite a man. In her journey back to her mother(s) land she admits, while carrying the corpse of her murdered rival "Jed would continue to be the thing that reminded me of my shortcomings before every woman and man ever loved him and considered loving me" (180).

The triangle inversion happens mostly at "the happy ending," when Clara, after having multiple relationships with men, becomes impregnated with Jed's semen, and returns to Micaela after months of separation. Micaela is able to forgive Clara, reconcile and ally with her mother, and claim a *sitio y lengua* in San Jacinto, and invert the triangle by agreeing to mother the twin children along with Clara. Symbolically, the twins come to represent the recovery of Micaela's lost brother and sister, and the duality of genders. Thus the twins disrupt the gendering birth process by embodying both male and female. Clara, representing the Indigenous, the raped, la chingada, la Malintzin, the treacherous heterosexual and lesbian woman, is re-claimed, just as Trujillo's Virgen de Guadalupe, as an empowered, decolonized woman lesbian subject with a *sitio y lengua*, that can now inhabit a place of equality with Micaela, her lesbian woman lover.



PUNTOS FINALES, PUNTOS SUSPENSIVOS

I began this essay with an auto-teoría narrative. Through a journey between journal entries, vignettes, essay and flash-fiction, I expose a daika auto-teoría: una manera de pensar que evoca los múltiples intersticios entre las heridas abiertas de mi cuerpo, alma, mente, espíritu de una daika fronteriza Tijuanaense. In fleshing out of the wounds I allow for my whole self to make parallels between the characters of the novels, to heal our heridas abiertas together, to learn from each other's nepantla pathways, pin-point our common moments of rupture, and align ourselves in a “nos/otros” community of butch lesbians, relegadas from our communities, acechadas, but slowly and surely, bridging our pains and sorrow, and turning them into a queer nepantlera community of love.

“Nepantleras acknowledge an unmapped common ground: the humanity of the other. We are the other, the other is us . . . Honoring people's otherness. Las nepantleras advocate a “nos/otras” position—an alliance between “us” and others.” In nos/otras the “us” divided in two, the slash in the middle representing the bridge—the best humanity we can hope for at the moment. Las nepantleras envision a time when the bridge will no longer be needed—we'll have shifted to a seamless nos/otras (Anzaldúa, 570).

In this nos/otras I rescue the broken me. I re-membered the dismembered Coyolxauhqui in my queer mestiza fronteriza identity. The characters function as an alternative to what *I* the potentially daika, machorra, marimacha, chancla, tortillera, cocha, lesbian could have been in an alternate world of decolonial imaginaries. For now, I suffice to say that I have met/read you—mi otro yo, and you have met me. ¡Que placer conocerte Marci y Micaela! . . .

NOTES

1. Translates from the colloquial Mexican Spanish as, “butch,” “tomboy,” and “dyke.”
2. Which appears earlier in *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987).
3. From the Spanish onomatopoeic word to exclaim surprise.
4. Sp. for “encouragement.”
5. Translates to, “You carry the presence of that knowledge with you.” Translation by the author.
6. In *Borderlands/ La Frontera*, Anzaldúa theorizes the rebel side of the Shadow-Beast as “the rebel in me . . . that refuses to take orders from outside authorities. If

refuses to take orders from my conscious will, it threatens the sovereignty of my rulership. It is that part of me that hates constraints of any kind, even those self-imposed (38).”While the monstrous part is assumed, “To avoid rejection, [as] some of us conform to the values of the culture, push the unacceptable parts into the shadows. Which leaves only one fear—that we will be found out and that the Shadow-Beast will break out of its cage . . . We try to make ourselves conscious of the Shadow-Beast, stare at the sexual lust and lust for power and destruction we see . . . the reigning order of heterosexual males project[ing] on our Beast” (42).

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