

The ZDP of a Chicana PhD Student:

a Play in One Act

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ACT IScene 1

Lights come up on center stage.
CHICANA and five of her former
professors are sitting around a
dinner table.

CHICANA

Have you read *Hunger of Memory* by Richard Rodriguez?

DR. PHIL

(scoffs)

No. I haven't read him on principal. He's the Latino
conservatives bring out and put on display to show they're
not racists.

lights go down and CHICANA steps
into a spotlight.

CHICANA

(to audience)

While I believe my professor's response is incomplete...one
might not read a text because one has no interest or time;
however, not reading a text on principle implies an
engagement with the ideas in the text that this response
negates... I would concur that Richard Rodriguez' politics
have not been received well by Chicano educators, especially
as Rodriguez does not identify as a Chicano or Latino.

Spotlight comes up on Stage Left
and a Latino man in a tweed suit
appears.

RICHARD RODRIGUEZ

Aztec ruins hold no special interest for me. I do not search
Mexican graveyards for ties to unnameable ancestors. I
assume I retain certain features of gesture and mood derived
from buried lives. I also speak Spanish today. And read
Garcia Lorca and Garcia Marquez at my leisure. But what
consolation can that fact bring against the knowledge that
my mother and father have never heard of Garcia Lorca or
Garcia Marquez? What preoccupies me is the immediate: the
separation I endure with my parents in loss. This is what
matters to me: the story of the scholarship boy who returns
home one summer from college to discover bewildering
silence, facing his parents. This is my story. An American
story. It is education that has altered my life. Carried me
far.

Spotlight on RICHARD RODRIGUEZ goes
down.

(CONTINUED)

CHICANA

How can this be? Rodriguez' philosophy is in complete juxtaposition of endeavors by educators to include a student's culture in the learning process. He celebrates his complete assimilation into American culture and recommends it as a course of action.

Fog appears on stage and COATLICUE appears on Stage Right. She is wearing a skirt of what look like live snakes and than a necklace made from human hearts, hands, and feet, she is bare-chested.

COATLICUE

CHICANA!

CHICANA

(Startled)

Who are you?

COATLICUE

I am Coatlicue, the mother of gods. I gave birth to the moon and stars. I gave birth to the god of sun and war. For as long as time has existed, I have disrupted women's thoughts. I have led them into a path of sorrowful contemplation.

CHICANA

(confused)

What do you want with me?

Music plays in the background, signaling the ascension of GLORIA ANZALDUA. GLORIA ANZALDUA is lowered to the stage on a cloud and she wears a saintly crown and white robe.

GLORIA ANZALDUA

CHICANA!

CHICANA

What the...?

GLORIA ANZALDUA

Coatlicue speaks the truth. Those activities or Coatlicue states which disrupt the smooth flow...complacency... of life are exactly what propel the soul to do its work. They make the soul increase consciousness of itself. Our greatest disappointments and painful experiences- if we make meanings out of them- can lead us toward becoming more of who we are.

(CONTINUED)

Gloria? CHICANA

GLORIA ANZALDUA descends from cloud throne, walking towards CHICANA.

Si, Mi'ja! GLORIA ANZALDUA

GLORIA ANZALDUA embraces CHICANA.

GLORIA ANZALDUA
We're here to help. Think of me as your madrina, your fairy godmother. And, Coatlicue... well think of her as your scary fairy godmother. She means well.

Thunder booms.

COATLICUE
The disquiet you have felt in your first year of PhD studies has been at my inculcation. In the midst of a new phase in your education, you have to question how you can avoid being engulfed by the White dominant culture that pervades American academia.

GLORIA ANZALDUA
The Facultad is at your disposal, CHICANA!

CHICANA
What is the Facultad?

GLORIA ANZALDUA
The Facultad is all those who have gone before you in academia and wish to add their voices to yours. Do not fear this. This is as it should be.

Lights go up Upstage and robed individuals appear sitting on wooden choir stalls. Music to Hallelujah plays. Two robed individuals descend from their seats and approach CHICANA.

CUERO & VALDEZ
(speaking in unison)
How can a Chicana PhD student attempt to conform to school without denying who she is?

All lights go down on stage.

Scene 2

Lights go up on stage and COATLICUE leads CHICANA across the stage. Stagehands assemble an early 1900s school room around them.

COATLICUE

Although Dewey intended to describe rote instruction... that is the methods used and not the content being taught... the following also applies to the valuing of White Eurocentric ideals by the American educational system through content choice/text selection.

JOHN DEWEY walks in from Stage Left and takes a place at the front of the classroom.

JOHN DEWEY

Learning here means acquisition of what already is incorporated in books and in the heads of the elders. Moreover, that which is taught is thought of as essentially static.

COATLICUE

The books and elders to which Dewey refers are the writings of...

Three robed individuals, METZGER, BOX, & BLASINGAME, poke their heads out from Stage Right and yell the following:

METZGER, BOX, & BLASINGAME

(in unison)

Dead White dudes!

METZGER, BOX, & BLASINGAME disappear Stage Right.

COATLICUE

...in the canon that teachers have felt justified in teaching you. This justification may stem from the fact that these texts are part of the proverbial canon

Stage hands roll in a canon with the word "Proverbial" painted on the side.

COATLICUE

Not that canon!

(a little frazzled)

As I was saying... This would truncate the learning experience of all students regardless of ethnicity, but, for
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

COATLICUE (cont'd)

you, CHICANA, this creates a dissonance which you do not initially have the ability to identify. You have not realized that the system privileges White Eurocentric ideals.

COATLICUE and CHICANA walk Down Stage center. Stage hands remove classroom and JOHN DEWEY exists Stage Left.

COATLICUE

But, this privileging of the White dominant culture extends beyond the P through 16 classroom into educational research.

WERTSCH rides on bicycle from Stage Right and circles COATLICUE and CHICANA.

WERTSCH

Comparative research favors those who use verbal mediation

COATLICUE

This would affect any research conducted with students who are English Language Learners because the verbal mediation strategies these students use would not be exclusively in English.

WERTSCH

Research of the relationship between speech and thinking has an ethnocentric bias.

COATLICUE

Most theory based on research in literacy actually is biased in favor of the White dominant culture. This makes it especially difficult for you because of your research interests, which involve studying literacy practices of members within your own culture.

WERTSCH

The sociocultural background of researchers affect what they espouse.

COATLICUE

You need to examine all that is accepted as gospel within academia through the lens of awareness that the theory you're studying may be biased in favor of the White dominant culture.

WERTSCH

We must consider how and why a particular voice occupies center stage, that is, why it is 'privileged' in a particular setting.

(CONTINUED)

COATLICUE

In this case, the particular voice being privileged is White Eurocentric, and the how is by holding center stage in American academia, and the why is because academic researchers..

Lights go up on robed individuals
on choir stalls.

ROBED INDIVIDUALS

(in unison)

We use theoretical frameworks which primarily relate to White dominant culture. We use research designs which favor White students. We inspire educational legislation which is biased in favor of the White dominant culture.

Lights go down on robed
individuals.

CHICANA

(angrily)

What the fuck am I supposed to do then?

Spotlight goes up on Stage Right on
CUERO & VALDEZ.

CUERO & VALDEZ

(in unison)

You need to rebel against the institutional authoring that exerts normalization pressures on Latin@ students.

All lights go down on Stage.

Scene 3

COATLICUE, CHICANA, and JOHN DEWEY
sit around a Tecate card table,
eating tacos.

COATLICUE

Dewey introduces the concept of miseducation in which the student's prospects are narrowed or stymied as a result of a negative educative experience.

JOHN DEWEY

The only escape from them in the standardized school is an activity which is irregular and perhaps disobedient.

COATLICUE

When faced with the new awareness that American higher education is predominantly White Eurocentric, as a Chicana, you should feel the urge to disobey and reject any more miseducative experiences in a classroom.

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JOHN DEWEY

Enforced uniformity individual tendencies operate in irregular and more or less forbidden ways.

CHICANA

(to COATLICUE)

I have no idea what he means.

COATLICUE

He means, you should begin to seek out "irregular and more or less forbidden ways" by reading through a new lens which does not privilege the White dominant culture.

CHICANA

But, all you've been showing me is...

METZGER, BOX, & BLASINGAME poke their heads out from Stage Left.

METZGER, BOX, & BLASINGAME

(in unison)

Dead White dudes!

COATLICUE

(blubbering)

But...but...but... Gloria's not a dead white dude!

METZGER, BOX, & BLASINGAME

(in unison)

Hey that's our line!

COATLICUE

Fine. You need to understand...

WERTSCH walks in from Stage Right and grabs a taco off JOHN DEWEY'S plate.

JOHN DEWEY

Hey!

COATLICUE

You need to understand...

WERTSCH

(between bites of taco)

...the dynamics involved with your social, political and institutional history.

Stage hands roll in a bar. TREVIÑO walks in from Stage Left in bar tender's uniform.

(CONTINUED)

TREVINO

(drying glasses)

After the war between Mexico and the United States ended in 1848, Mexican-Americans lost millions of acres of land to Anglo-Americans. With this land loss, Mexican Americans lost wealth, social status, economic power and political influence. Suddenly, Mexican Americans went from being natives to being immigrants overnight, creating a different immigrant experience than that of the "Ellis Island" immigrant.

FEHLER walks in from Stage Right with a crate of glasses and places them on bar.

FEHLER

Also, many Anglo-Americans were overtly racists and the civic authorities ignored Mexican Americans. The Rio Grande River, once a symbol of unity, now served to divide and accentuate the differences between Mexican Americans and Anglo Americans. After the Treaty of Guadalupe, Anglo-Americans saw the Mexican culture as a threat to democracy and capitalism. Sentiment of white superiority supported the view that Mexican Americans were lazy and should receive little pay for work. Anglo-American pioneers justified taking the best opportunities in the newly acquired land by viewing the Mexican Americans as subhuman. Many early Anglo settlers in Texas understood the power of demoralizing a people their language, customs, and traditions. Even some of the settlers who participated in teaching Mexican Americans English withheld some kinds of literacy.

POWERS walks in from Stage Right pushing an elote cart. White screen descends Upstage. A black and white 8mm movie plays depicting what POWERS describes.

POWERS

Initially, Anglo-Americans used the excuse that Mexican American students were not English proficient as justification to segregate them; and so, in the 1930s, this became common practice in Arizona regardless of the English proficiency of Mexican students. Routinely, additional buildings were built to move white students into the newer and better facilities. Not only did Mexican American have classes in poor conditions, but their educational pathways differed from that of Anglo-American students. For example, in one school for Mexican Americans, three years of first grade were established, again with the justification that the Mexican American students had poor English skills. Such a distinction was not made in the Anglo American school even

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

POWERS (cont'd)

when students demonstrated poor literacy skills. The differences proved even more nefarious than this. Mexican students not only received fewer books than Anglo-American students, but they were also corporeally punished or suffered mouth washing with soap if they were caught speaking Spanish. Not even the argument that Mexican American students needed to be segregated due to limited English proficiency stood the test of challenge. Mexican American students either were not being tested for English proficiency; and, even if they were tested and were considered English proficient, they were kept in the Mexican American school. In reality, the premise that Mexican Americans had citizenship rights was complete fiction.

HUGHES-HASSELL appears from Stage Right holding a pitcher of lemonade, and walks toward table.

HUGHES-HASSELL

(to CHICANA)

What your K through 12 teachers may not have understood is that as a Chicana, you are more likely to question your identity than White students. More than likely you became aware of racism at an early age, and on a daily basis, you face a world that judges you based on your skin color. The education you received before has tried to convince you that the White dominant culture is better, and you may feel the need to reject your culture in order to succeed. But, rebel against this. Disobey and provide a counter-story, which sheds light on the miseducation you have received thus far.

All lights go down on stage.

Scene 4

JOHN DEWEY, CHICANA, and COATLICUE appear on Center Stage holding hoes. Stage hands roll out a back drop of rows of tomatoes in fields.

JOHN DEWEY

Just as the individual has to draw in memory upon his own past to understand the conditions in which he individually finds himself, so the issues and problems of present social life are in such intimate and direct connection with the past that students cannot be prepared to understand either these problems or the best way of dealing with them without delving into their roots in the past.

(CONTINUED)

COATLICUE

If you interpret "the issues and problems of present social life" to include those present in a learning environment, then Dewey is recommending that you delve into your own past-down to your cultural roots in order to facilitate the solving of these problems and by extension to facilitate your learning.

VYGOTSKY appears from Stage Left wearing a long-sleeved plaid shirt and jeans. He also holds a hoe.

VYGOTSKY

Cognition and language are connected in such a way that a child will be unable to complete some tasks if he isn't permitted to use language.

CHICANA

My first language is Spanish, it was imperative for me to use Spanish during my formative years of education. However, because I was denied this right, then certain skills became challenging or even impossible.

VYGOTSKY

A child starts to build cognitive structures through the use language.

COATLICUE

This supports the use of the native language in the classroom. The way in which a Chicana thinks and processes information is closely connected to her languages.

VYGOTSKY

Cultural behaviors reconstruct psychological activity.

COATLICUE

This could signify the culture in which you were raised and also the new academic culture you are trying to acculturate into. Basically, you must re-appropriate your first language and realize that your first language and culture has shaped how your brain works.

JOHN DEWEY

Next, you must find professors who are aware of the potentialities for leading students into new fields which belong to experiences already had and who use this knowledge as their criterion for selection and arrangement of the conditions that influence their students' present experience.

COATLICUE

In other words, your professors need to connect new knowledge to funds of knowledge you already possesses-the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

COATLICUE (cont'd)

funds of knowledge your culture has gifted you. Do not hesitate if none of your professors are cultural peers. That's okay. Regardless of your professors' ethnicities, you can both look for ways of identifying your funds of knowledge.

The rumble of a tractor is heard off stage. WERTSCH and BAHKTIN enter from Stage Left on a tractor.

WERTSCH

Bahktin provides a way for a cultural outsider to communicate with a cultural insider in an effective way.

BAHKTIN

Languages and their uses are interrelated or enter into dialogic interanimation...how one language, for example, may be used to provide counterwords to another.

COATLICUE

So, in this instance, the professor will enter the conversation using the traditional academic language and you will enter the conversation using your cultural language... that is your funds of knowledge...and because of the interrelatedness of languages, you and your professor will negotiate the learning. You will create, perhaps, a new language with which to communicate that does not alienate you or your culture...or the professor for that matter.

BAHKTIN

Don't forget multiple authorship and multiple voices within a text!

COATLICUE

This means that embedded in the texts...written or verbal... you produce are the voices of your ancestors. You must learn to identify these voices, which will strengthen your understanding of any new knowledge you encounter. Ironically, you cannot acculturate into White academia until you embrace your Mexican indigenous roots.

All lights go down on stage.

Scene 5

Lights come up on a 1950s classroom in Hargill, Texas. A White teacher is towering over a Mexican girl.

WHITE TEACHER

If you can't speak English, you should go back to Mexico!

(CONTINUED)

Mexican girl shivers and walks out Stage Right. Spotlight comes up on Down Stage Left. A young Mexican woman in 1960s outfit reads her course schedule.

YOUNG GLORIA

I have to take two speech classes.

WHITE TEACHER

All Chicano students have to take two speech classes at university in order to get rid of their accents.

CHICANA

Is that young Gloria?

COATLICUE

Yes. She opened the path for you, taking the theories of White men like Vygotsky and Bakhtin, and making them into a new concept applicable to you, Chicana.

GLORIA ANZALDUA DESCENDS ON HER
CLOUD ONCE MORE.

CHICANA

Yay! Gloria's back!

GLORIA ANZALDUA

For a people who are neither Spanish nor live in a country in which Spanish is the first language; for a people who live in a country which English is the reigning tongue but who are not Anglo; for a people who cannot entirely identify with either standard (formal, Castilian) Spanish nor standard English, what recourse is left to them but to create their own language? A language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves—a language with terms that are neither español ni ingles, but both. We speak a patois, a forked tongue, a variation of two languages.

AZTEC WARRIORS, ZOOT SUITERS, and
CHOLOS come out from all directions
on the stage.

AZTEC WARRIORS

(in unison)

You have internalized the dominant culture's belief that your language is...

GLORIA ANZALDUA

...illegitimate, a bastard language...

(CONTINUED)

ZOOT SUITERS

(in unison and leaning back)

Chicano languages and Chicano experiences are many and diverse.

CHOLOS

(in unison)

Your ethnic identity is linked to your language. English speakers should accommodate to you.

COATLICUE

Gloria will teach you to say...

GLORIA ANZALDUA descends from her cloud and walks to Center Stage.

GLORIA ANZALDUA

I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white. I will have my serpent's tongue-my woman's voice, my sexual voice, my poet's voice. I will overcome the tradition of silence.

CHICANA

(amazed)

Wow... Chicanos can write and get published?

GLORIA ANZALDUA

You straddle the borderlands. You were born on U.S. soil, and your identity as a Mexican is not a national one but a racial one.

CHICANA

I need my own borderland identity! I can't be the White man's Hispanic, and even Latina falls a bit short because...I...am...a...

A light from heaven appears and caricatures of angel's trumpets drop and sound offstage.

CHICANA

(screaming at heavenly light and trumpets)

Oh no you don't!

Heavenly light and trumpets go away.

CHICANA

Where was I? Oh, yes... I ...am...a...Chicana!

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Mariachis start playing offstage, and then the sound of a record being scratched, and then cumbias play. The music changes a few times before ending on Rebecca Lane's raps.

All lights go down on Stage.

Scene 6

Lights come up on a library. CHICANA stands with COATLICUE, BAKHTIN, and WERTSCH.

WERTSCH

After positioning yourself historically, culturally, socially, politically, and institutionally...

COATLICUE

...you are ready to come out to the academic world as a Chicana scholar.

HABERMAS enters stage dressed as librarian and holding large book.

HABERMAS

Each agent can monitor public access to the system of his own intentions, thoughts, attitudes, desires, feelings, and the like, to which only he has privileged access. Thus the central conception of presentation of self does not signify spontaneous expressive behavior but stylizing the expression of one's own experience with a view to the audience.

COATLICUE

You can present yourself to your audience, the White academic world, stylizing the expression of your experiences, which include all of your thoughts and attitudes as a Chicana.

BAKHTIN

To express oneself means to make oneself an object for another and for oneself...the actualizing consciousness.

COATLICUE

As you negotiate your identity as a Chicana scholar, you sift into your receptacle bits of the White Eurocentric knowledge, but more importantly, you sift in your own language, culture, and the multiple voices of your ancestors embedded in your own words.

FECHO enters wheeling in a book cart.

(CONTINUED)

FECHO

Learning and using language, therefore, involves negotiating the social context of that language, the power issues described by the language choices that are made, and the complexities of making those words the language user's own.

COATLICUE

Every interaction within your new academic existence will involve negotiations and power struggles, but you can navigate them with your command of all your languages.

All lights go down on stage.

Scene 7

The lights come up on stage and all the scholars are in regalia, standing in a line shoulder to shoulder. CHICANA is in regalia as well.

HALLIDAY & WEBSTER

The ambilingualism you experienced by learning to be literate in Spanish and English, now includes the languages of learning within White academia, but more importantly the language of your Chicana scholar identity.

BAHKTIN

When one begins to hear voices in languages, jargons, and styles, these cease to be potential means of expression and become actual, realized expression; the voice that has mastered them has entered into them. They are called upon to play their own unique and unrepeatable role in speech, in creative, communication.

COATLICUE

Your words are embedded with multiple voices like a Greek chorus, including both your indigenous culture and the Western Eurocentric culture. A combination of both will be your own unique, creative communication.

WERTSCH

At the start of your journey, the norm within the academic group expected a behavior...

COATLICUE

...which did not include your language and culture; but, now your self-presentation will gain you admittance at the scholarly table.

WALT WHITMAN

Accept this admittance as you will contribute your own verse...

(CONTINUED)

CHICANA

Woah! Even Walt is here!

CUERO & VALDEZ

...legitimizing your voice instead of being marginalized, changing and adapting on your own terms, always negotiating your responses in lieu of your new social position.

COATLICUE

You learn that this entire process has involved Vygotsky's zone of proximal development.

VYGOTSKY points at himself proudly.

COATLICUE

Although traditionally this concept is used with early education, this can certainly apply to all levels of learning, including your indoctrination into the world of higher education...

(as aside to audience)

...putting aside, of course, that he studied this concept with White Western children in mind-but you can appropriate it and modify it to work for your Chicana mind...

VYGOTSKY scowls.

This ZPD has challenged your sense of comfort.

FECHO

Through transactions with experienced others, you have achieved a measure of independence...only to be thrust back into ZPD as the next learning transaction occurs.

COATLICUE

The journey is not over; it will not be easy, but it will be your truth.

COATLICUE hands CHICANA a diploma
as the lights go down on stage.