



México Interdisciplinario / Interdisciplinary Mexico

ISSN 2193-9756



XVII. Transborder Matters

2020/1, año 9, n° 17, 207 pp.

Editora: **Romana Radlwimmer**

DOI: 10.23692/iMex.17

Action as deferment: Anzaldua's *conocimiento* as critical thinking

(pp. 36-49; DOI: 10.23692/iMex.17.3)

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Abstract: In this article I focus on a pedagogical notion inspired by Anzaldua's 'left hand maneuvers' as critical thinking, which I call *Tilting Pedagogies*. *Tilting Pedagogies* are *left hand maneuvers* – connecting critical operations – that cross over to meet social urgencies as a way to incarnate theoretical thought inside the classroom. *Tilting pedagogies* represent those notions, actions and maneuvers that allow us to 'incline' – tilt – from academia to social urgencies, from Spanish to English and vice versa, from northern to southern epistemologies, from final to deferred signification and towards the classroom as a critical space. These operations dwell between urgency and deferment of final meaning. I use inclination in its double meaning: as a tendency, a preference, rather an incitation and as an act of bending and leaning. In short: inclination as an incitement to tilt towards interruption and deferment, as two actions that are necessary to read theory not only as a local frame, but to interconnect it with other active forms of knowledge. This is what Anzaldua's *conocimiento* produces: incitation to tilt, interrupt and bend over.

Keywords: Tilting Pedagogies, Left Hand Maneuvers, Classroom, Critical Thinking, Interruption, Deferment, Social Urgencies



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Website:

www.imex-revista.com

Editores iMex:

Vittoria Borsò, Frank Leinen, Guido Rings, Yasmin Temelli

Redacción iMex:

Hans Bouchard, Bianca Morales García, Ana Cecilia Santos, Stephen Trinder

Action as deferment: Anzaldua's *conocimiento* as critical thinking¹

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Tilt: incline, displace from the axis, slant, give an oblique direction. Generate an inclination, a slope.

In this article, I focus on a pedagogical notion inspired by Anzaldua's critical thinking, which I call *tilting pedagogies*.² *Tilting pedagogies* are *left hand*³ maneuvers – connecting operations developed by Anzaldua – that cross over to meet social urgencies as a way to incarnate theoretical thought.⁴ *Tilting pedagogies* represent those notions, actions and maneuvers that allow us to 'incline' – or tilt. They allow us to move from academia to social urgencies, from Spanish to English and viceversa and from northern to southern epistemologies. Here I use *tilting* in its double meaning: as a tendency, a preference, rather an incitation and as an act of bending and leaning. In short: inclination as an incitation to tilt. This is what Anzaldua's *conocimiento*⁵ produces: incitations to tilt and bend over.

Tilting pedagogies could be understood as a pedagogical operation which favors frictions that revolve learning and position it at the border with the body. Several questions arise: What is the kind of knowledge intended to be produced by tilting? Which body is involved, invented, recreated? What 'appears' in the classroom when it is inclined? What kind of practices imply the inclination towards suspended bodies, or better, bodies and texts in suspense, that is, in transit to be *other*?

These pedagogies are inscribed in the fields of gender, visual and border knowledge and were generated at the Gender Studies Program (2004-2013)⁶ at the UNAM in México City. As

¹ I thank Romana Radlwimmer for the careful, productive and extremely generous critique, information and revising she offered to this article.

² For the foundation of *tilting pedagogies*, see Belausteguigoitia / Lozano (2013) and Belausteguigoitia / Gutiérrez Magallanes (2013).

³ See Anzaldua (1990: xxvi-xxvii).

⁴ Throughout this article, I will explain both terms, *tilting pedagogies* – a term I created –, which resonates with *left hand maneuvers*, Anzaldua's understanding for actions that incline to touch and connect with the other, the different. *Tilting* develops from the inclinations offered by perspectives on gender, critical pedagogy and visual discourse.

⁵ See Anzaldua (2002).

⁶ My work with Anzaldua began with my graduate dissertation at University of California at Berkeley, with Norma Alarcón as advisor (1996-2001). Later in México at the UNAM, I elaborated on this work to create a new graduate curricular option on Cultural Critique and Gender Studies in the fields of Education, Latin-American, Visual and Cultural Studies at the Humanities, and coordinated the translation of Anzaldua's and Sandoval's texts. What I refer to in this paper is the first development of this curricular initiative – called OIP-EGCC (Orientación

a collective of professors, students, activists and artists gathered initially around the Gender Studies Program, Programa de Estudios de Género (PUEG / UNAM; 2004-2013), and later as a collective interested in Anzaldúa's critical thinking, we have been doing significant work related to Chicana Latino Studies and particularly with Anzaldúa's notions.⁷

Two of the most outstanding texts which fosters these types of cross-over-mechanisms are Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* and Chela Sandoval's *Methodologies of the Oppressed*. As part of a tilt towards Chicana epistemologies, we translated Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands: La Frontera* and Chela Sandoval's *Methodologies of the Oppressed* into Spanish. With regards to the history of this program, fifteen years ago we created a curricular innovation inspired in Anzaldúa, highlighting Gender Studies, Critical Culture, Pedagogy and Visual Discourse.⁸ Under a reorganized curriculum, every year we teach three graduate seminars and two undergraduate ones. The core of inspiration for these seminars is Anzaldúa's narrative and theory. In this article, I expand on the notion of *tilting pedagogies* as a set of maneuvers inclined towards action, from academia to the activation of knowledge. I see interruption and deferment as two actions that are necessary to read theory not only under a local frame, but to inter-connect it with other active forms of knowledge.

In his article 'Traveling Theory' (1983), Said announces the importance of the act of interruption. What he calls "resistance to theory" represents the refusal of reading texts that are not interrupted by local concerns, context, urgencies, tensions and place based questions.

Indeed I would go as far as saying that it is a critic's job to provide resistance to theory, to open it up to historical reality, toward society, toward human needs and interests, to point up those concrete instances drawn from every day reality that lie outside or just beyond the interpretative area necessarily designated to advance and thereafter circumscribed by every theory (Said 1983: 242).

It is Donna Haraway who refers also to a form of interruption by calling to objectivity only through a partial perspective: "The moral is simple: only partial perspective promises objective vision" (Haraway 2003: 394).

This interruption of theory – to be properly transformed into knowledge – as needed concepts but also as urgent actions, is called *conocimiento* by Anzaldúa. *Conocimiento* means connection; for Anzaldúa, *conocimiento's* most important function is to connect "apparently

Interdisciplinaria de Estudios de Género y Crítica Cultural/Interdisciplinary Emphasis of Gender Studies and Cultural Critique) running from 2007 to 2013 on a first stage (as Chair of Gender Studies) and later from 2014 until today.

⁷ The collective is organized around the programs and fields of pedagogy, education, human rights, aesthetics (artistic practices and activism) and visual discourse. Rian Lozano, Patricia Piñones, Nina Hoecht, Coco Gutiérrez Magallanes are some of their most important activists and professors. The collective is conformed also by graduate and undergraduate students, artists and activists like Gelen Geleton.

⁸ See Anzaldúa (2015a) and Sandoval (2015).

disparate events, people, experiences and realities. These connections lead to action" (Keating 2015: xxvii).

I focus on two notions to understand the way Anzaldúa intervenes in the concept of 'knowledge' and transforms it into *conocimiento*. In her latest work *Light in the Dark / Luz en lo oscuro*, Anzaldúa locates *conocimiento* as an unending transformation process, as some sort of fugitive and errant term (traveling, as Said underlines),⁹ which represents a deviation from a final definition, calling for action of disparate people, in unexpected places and through unanticipated events. These three registers (disparate, unexpected and unanticipated) foster open forms of signification, which better serve this relevant form of connection. It appears when places, people and events are not previously defined, but open to endless signification. It is as if the last impulse, the last accent for signification, developing into action, was deference: a type of detour to connect disparate places, people and events. AnaLouise Keating explains Anzaldúa's understanding of *conocimiento*:

Anzaldúa redefines the term [*knowledge*], incorporating imaginal, spiritual-activist, and ontological dimensions. [...] Anzaldúa's *conocimiento* is profoundly relational and enables those who enact it to make connections among apparently disparate events, people, experiences, and realities. These connections [...] lead to action (Keating 2015: xxvii).

Intrusion and deferment are operations used by Anzaldúa as maneuvers and processes to signal the detour to produce *conocimiento*, as a set of ideas, notions, concepts, narratives that may open to signification in infinite ways. For example, Spanish language and the visual register represent alternative codes to academia in the US, these codes interrupt and deviate from both, the English as hegemonic language and the written format as privileged form of academic thinking. To speak in Spanish, to switch from writing to visual discourse, constitute two displacements which move away from both hegemonic languages – Spanish and writing – to open new frames of reading. They function – as Anzaldúa would state – as an activation of forms of communication connecting and producing *conocimiento*.

In Anzaldúa's critical proposal action is central, it has to do with knowledge as a precise way of acting upon it. A central deferment involves the *left hand*, favoring the detours which enable that sort of creativity entailed by the unseen and the forgotten, the squid. To act upon what we know – but is complicated to be represented, like Spanish or visual language – requires a detour, a sort of interruption of the way knowledge is envisioned and represented systematically. In this contribution, I concentrate on the kind of detour and interruption through *atravesamientos* as inter(re)ferences, to achieve activation and appropriation of knowledge, an example of this

⁹ See Said (1983).

could be the use Spanish, or Chicano Spanish and the use of images to read or foster theoretical notions.¹⁰

We find this emphasis in Anzaldúa's visual and linguistic work in a collection of documents at the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas (UT). As part of this collective of activists, students, artists, and academics interested in Anzaldúa's critical thinking, Rian Lozano, Nina Hoecht and Coco Magallanes, coordinated in 2016 an exhibit of Anzaldúa's drawings. A selection was brought to the UNAM and later to different museums and cultural centers (*casas de la cultura*), in México City. The exhibition was called *Entre palabra e imagen. Galería de pensamiento de Gloria Anzaldúa*. This was the first time these drawings were exposed at the south of the Rio Bravo. These images were also used in our graduate and undergraduate seminars at the UNAM, confronting us with several questions: How do we read and re-appropriate the visual, activist, academic work of Anzaldúa? How does her vision and critical thinking relate to action? In which way do these images interrupt linguistic hegemonies and communicate tensions related with sexuality, dispossession and disappearance? How do these operations of communication get translated when used in other contexts such as the Mexican academic scenario?

The first image of the exhibition *Entre imagen y palabra* is Anzaldúa's open hand, one that represents doing, by knowing and communicating in between asymmetrical situations and people.¹¹ I quote:

Con los ojos y la lengua como pluma en la mano izquierda

Staying alive [...] requires strategies [...] of survival and resistance. One strategy brings together three different abilities – communicating, knowing, and doing, which I represent in my hieroglyph of a left hand on whose palm are pictured a pair of eyes, a mouth with a tongue hanging out and the writing tip of a pen at the tip of the tongue. Los ojos represent seeing and knowing which can lead to understanding or conocimiento. It means getting to know each other and, as mestizas form many cultures, seeing from multiple points of view [...]. La lengua is a symbol for speech, for breaking silence by talking, communicating and writing. The split forked tongue of a serpent is my signal for communicating bilingually (Anzaldúa 2009: 211f.).

Anzaldúa elaborates on the importance of the hand by stretching the Spanish translation of 'mano' into *maneuvers: left hand maneuvers*, as the 'need to act upon what we know', but also

¹⁰ Anzaldúa specifies in *Borderlands: La Frontera*, that Chicano Spanish, Chicano-Texas-Spanish, Spanglish are deviated, improper and at the same time living languages for minorities in the US. She protests in *Borderlands* that until she is free to "write bilingually and to switch codes without always having to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish, when I rather would speak Spanglish, and as long I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate" (Anzaldúa 2007: 59).

¹¹ The image depicting the hand comes from the exhibit *Entre palabra e imagen. Galería de pensamiento de Gloria Anzaldúa*. Anzaldúa's image was published, and can be seen, in Sharpe (2017). For more information on the exhibit, see also Höchtel (2016), Gutiérrez Magallanes (2018: 132).

that appears in opposition of what we know, by highlighting the actions and representation of the odd, the unexpected and the strange. *Left hand maneuvers* are inclined paradoxically to both familiar and unexpected actions and practices. Anzaldúa refers to them as a capacity to act at the border of the expected and the unexpected, the familiar and the uncanny, theory and practice, word and image, female and other, Spanish and English.¹²

Early in her work we find the notion of 'left' through el *Mundo Zurdo*, referring to the *left* as the odd, the unexpected, linked also with the ones that sleep with hunger, the disappeared, the forgotten ones.¹³ The hand, the left hand reminds us to act upon what we know, but closely attached to the sinister and the strange, to that which escapes and remains invisible. "To activate *conocimiento*" means to interrupt:

To activate the *conocimiento* and communication we need the hand. The hand is an agent of action. It is not enough to speak and write and talk and communicate. It is not enough to see and recognize and know. We need to act upon what we know, to do something about it. The left hand has always been seen as sinister and strange, associated with the female gender and creativity. But in unison with the right, the left hand can perform great things (Anzaldúa 2009: 212).

Interruption and appropriation: the deferred classroom

Anzaldúa's writing, visual and theoretical work –what is understood as her production of *conocimiento* – is a process guided by constant intersections and interruptions: neutral writing is interrupted by autobiography, word by image, English by Spanish, and Spanish by Chicano-Spanish, the tongue of the "deslenguadas" (Anzaldúa 1987: 58). In Anzaldúa's proposal of *conocimiento*, there is no hegemonic system that remains uninvolved, uninterrupted. Anzaldúa states the rebellion of her tongue as "*Deslenguadas. Somos las del español deficiente*. We are your linguistic nightmare, your linguistic aberration [...]. Because we speak with tongues of fire we are culturally crucified" (Anzaldúa 2007: 80). Herein lies the importance of critical thought. Thus, we face a textuality which is product of crossings and intersections, a writing of a paradox (urgency and interruption) and an oxymoron (an urgent postponement). Writing from suspense and postponement means doing theory, but incarnate (located) theory, from the South, from the body, from the *pocho* (*deslenguada*) tongue.

¹² In Spanish the expression "mano izquierda" means to be able to act properly in extremely difficult and unexpected circumstances. It means to have an invisible and special capacity to deal with unexpected events.

¹³ The notion of *Mundo Zurdo* appears at the closing section of Anzaldúa's essay 'La Prieta', in *This Bridge called by Back*: "We are the queer groups, the people that don't belong anywhere, not in the dominant world nor completely within our own respective cultures. Combined we cover so many oppressions. But the overwhelming oppression is the collective fact that we do not fit [...]. In El Mundo Zurdo I with my own affinities and my people with theirs can live together and transform the planet" (Anzaldúa 1983: 209).

Inside a deferred classroom, and within these detours, students may be capable of thinking by interrupting what they read; authorized to cross through theoretical paradigms in different languages (including Chicano Spanish), which otherwise could be read without interruption, away from a sort of criticism emanating from linguistic accents and far from inscribing borders into their reading practices. What does it mean to train students to be capable of throwing their bodies and their tongues in (*atravesarlos*), of getting them in the way of what they read? What does it take to put the body along the text, the image beyond the word? What does it mean to stand in the way or cross (*atravesar*) of theoretical texts?

The act of interrupting theoretical texts helps students to appropriate and use them, and not the other way around. This way, Anzaldúa's *pensamiento atravesado* – critical knowledge – becomes a model for pedagogies of interruption, that tilt towards social urgencies. It encourages not only to cross borders, but to 'stick the tongue out', interrupting the theoretical texts that may be difficult to appropriate and – if not interrupted – block questions that come from within the students about their own social concerns, doubts, personal and current fears and anxieties.

Anzaldúa refers to her rebellious tongue, strong and stubborn, a tongue that 'keeps pushing'. In that same chapter "How to tame a wild tongue", she addresses the importance of Spanish "a language with which we could communicate with ourselves" (Anzaldúa 2007: 77) and a distorted English called "pochismos" (Anzaldúa 2007: 78). One has to stop when reading texts interrupted by Chicano Spanish.

The first byproduct of our students' approach to complex theoretical texts is suspense, deferring the last word, interrupting. From this operation and these mechanics, drawn from an Anzaldúan pedagogy, emerges the practice of theorizing as an act of interrupting, and suspending the signification process.

La teoría como interrupción: lo que se atraviesa

In *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa depicts *los atravesados* (the queer, migrants, Mexicans), as the bodies that obstruct modernity. *Los atravesados* represent the border and its crossing, this constant state of transition: "The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los atravesados* live here: the 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'" (Anzaldúa 2007: 25).

Anzaldúa's theoretical texts are preceded by strategic ambivalence and suspension of meaning, as routes deligned by the postponement of an imminent final signification, a displacement named by Lacan as the errantry of the signifier – as so of signification – and made

into a pedagogy by Gloria Anzaldúa: deferment as pedagogy.¹⁴ This delay/detour in the process of signification may be read as a theoretical maneuver. In a contradictory manner, ambulance, delay and suspension are the routes to achieve an urgent knowledge –open and diverse to be used by the many deviant and dispossessed– be it pedagogical, historic or sexual. The kind of knowledge students need is not usually at the tip of the tongue, it needs to wonder and wander to their own tongue, to its tip, to be significant. This wonder and wander on language signals the process of finding and using a language which corresponds to a way of living "[u]n lenguaje que corresponde a un modo de vivir" (Anzaldúa 2007: 77); a language which is not Español nor inglés, but both.

This ambulance, errance, as detour, which confronts racial signification, through hegemonic language deferment gives way to what we call decolonial pedagogies, or maniobras which – along with Sandoval, Cusicanqui, Lugones, Fanon – reminds us that critical thought is only possible if it is based on the activation of knowledge, which encompasses necessary detours for the interruption of academic or hegemonic theories, languages and thinking. Decolonial pedagogies or maneuvers inscribe the urgent and displaced possibility for theory (as critical thought), only within the process of interruption as a movement of ambulance: going from a dispossessed body to one with the disposition for the appropriation of knowledge, wandering from one geocultural or disciplinary border to another by crossing from inside academia to the outside and the other way around.¹⁵ Wondering and wandering, suspending final signification, amounts to the postponement of the arrival of a destined, or prefigured knowledge.

Anzaldúa's work responds to a strategic "resistance to theory" (Said 1983: 242) , and at the same time to the need of theorizing from the body, of 'embodying' portions of theoretical thinking (experiences, emotions and transactions), that are necessary to understand each other and build bridges between different subjects, fields and strategies of resistance and survival. The classroom is a space where this kind of delays, suspensions, deviations and detours are most effective. It is in the creation of an interval inside the classroom, where the process of activation of *conocimiento* may be generated. I am proposing the classroom as deviated and suspended device, and so as a place for theoretical production. By which maneuvers may the classroom develop as a theoretical, ambulant interval, as a *Nepantla* site?¹⁶

¹⁴ See Lacan (1971).

¹⁵ In *Light in the Dark*, Anzaldúa uses the term *decolonization* frequently. In 2013, two years before this last book of Anzaldúa would be published posthumously, Norma Alarcón foresaw this trend in Anzaldúan thought. Alarcón referred to the so far-published Anzaldúan texts, stating that even if Anzaldúa herself did not mention the term *decolonization* for "her life-long project to heal the inner wounds and the sociopolitical and economic wounds of colonization", her "project's *telos* was a quest for personal and political decolonization" (Alarcón 2013: 189).

¹⁶ To Anzaldúa, *Nepantla* is "el lugar de la frontera" and the "perspective from the cracks" (Anzaldúa 2015b: 47; 81).

Suspended bodies inside the *tilted* classroom

It is a known fact that, as students move forward in academia and leave behind grammar school, junior high, and high school, and undergraduate studies, they also leave behind the body. Students in academia need to gradually give up those corporeal signs which could compromise the veracity, verisimilitude and legitimacy of their knowledge: decorporatizing the body is considered a sign of academic investiture.

Anzaldúa's teaching is interested in the exact opposite: an inclination towards the body, an invitation to 'make it appear', to cross/dress it, to invest in it; that means to 'produce' it at the borders of academia. With the body appearing at the limits of the academic scene, we underline teaching inventiveness under a set of practices that transform notions of discipline, time, space, canon and academic writing, and favor academia to incline towards radically different experiences, bodies, extended outsides, at the borders of its fields and disciplines.

In Anzaldúa's work such intermittent return to the body (visible-invisible, textual-carnal, deferred-present, yours-mine, ours-theirs) is key to the incarnation of criticism. In this sense a return to the body – inside the classroom – could represent a critical *movida* inside a space where the body is severely blocked. I understand *movidas* as Chela Sandoval addressed them in her chapter "Love as Hermeneutics of Social Change, A Decolonizing Movida" in the book *Methodology of the Oppressed* as "operations that situate and legitimate subaltern knowledge and articulate methodologies in the process of building by assembling texts from both sides of the border" (Sandoval 2000: 109). Chela Sandoval's "border" is not only geographical, it refers also to the border between activism and academia, institutional theorization and embodied one, individual and collective, disciplinary and transdisciplinary thinking, hegemonic and 'subaltern' canon.

Anzaldúa's pedagogical maneuvers move also inside the classroom; they represent an investment in the absent body (the one missing, the one not there) and intermittent return of the postponed/deferred ones. The deferred body (the body to come) may occupy different subjective positions, may better incline when opposing restricted views. The deferred body 'tilts' or shifts, to occupy liminal positions inside academic scenarios. 'The body to come' is the one which is constructed under a specific inclination to negotiate identity and subjectivity in contact with other views and political, academic or subjective perspectives.

In her later work, Anzaldúa goes from el *Mundo Zurdo* to the notion of *new tribalism*, though she never abandons el *Mundo Zurdo* as the category which includes the strange, the alien, those who do not belong. *Mundo Zurdo* is the place for those who represent a threat "*somos una amenaza*" (Anzaldúa 1988: 168).

Anzaldúa in her later work, uses the notion of new tribalism to continue to build the notion of "transcend[ing] the 'us' versus 'them' mentality" (Anzaldúa 2015: 85) through narration and story-telling, as we perceive in the following quote: "The new tribalism is about being part of but never subsumed by a group, never losing individuality to the group nor losing the group to individuality. The new tribalism is about working [...] diverse futures. It's about rethinking our narratives of history, ancestry, and even of reality itself" (Anzaldúa 2015: 85).

Tilting pedagogies explores the inclinations towards the body, postponed signification and the errant classroom, to make an embodied artistic, pedagogic, epistemological practice move along realities. Final meanings and writing (which go unrevised under these inclinations), closed and defined and definitive identities tend to hinder interconnectedness, interdisciplinary perspectives, which can overflow rigid borders of academia. 'Straight' (not tilted) sexualities and other signs of identity are put into question – are postponed – through the understanding of theory and academic discourse as some sort of activation of knowledge and critical thinking and transformation. *Tilting pedagogies* leans in favor of practices that incline towards the non-regulated, the new, the unexpected. There is always a way of inventing a body, somebody, a way of rearranging their pleasures and desires, and escaping the many and reductive identities and labels placed upon us.

Tilting pedagogies: The production of an inclined classroom as site of apparition as critical thinking

Tilting pedagogies resonate with Anzaldúa's aesthetics and *movidas*¹⁷, they constitute inclinations towards frictions that revolve academic learning and position it at the border of academia and disciplinary knowledge in favor of an activation of knowledge.

The mechanics, the process, and the necessary inclinations for transforming – turning – the classroom into an open, public space ('inclined' to the activation of knowledge) favors contact with excluded or liminal knowledge and the appearance of absent bodies and of collective practices that raise urgent issues.

Tilting operations imply an inclination towards an academia, opened to reconsider its public mission, its service not only to disembodied knowledge (useful for different disciplinary advances), but to an embodied one, located at the fringes of disciplines and practices and in the actual student's bodies (as in the formation of collectives of students). This marginal or liminal

¹⁷ Anzaldúa uses the term *movidas* to refer to processes of transformation: "Ours are individual and small group *movidas*, unpublicized *movimientos*" (Anzaldúa 1990: xxvii). Other Chicana theorists also use the term. Chela Sandoval points out that "[i]t is love that can access and guide our theoretical and political *movidas*—revolutionary maneuvers toward decolonized being" (Sandoval 2000: 141).

position refers also to the empowerment of disrupted and fragmented lives of many of our students, whose gender, class, sexual and racial affiliations jeopardize severely their academic future (a majority of them first generation students¹⁸).

With the figure of the tilted academia, I explore the tilting, displacement and redistribution of knowledge, the rearranging of its disposition, its management and its administration. An academia off-axis, inclined towards the administration of a 'body to come' (suspended, deferred body of knowledge, student body, collective body). Tilted and deferment as pedagogy, and critical thinking as content is possible through three avenues: contact with sexuality (as a *movida* to make the suspended body appear), activism (as intervention of academia when inclined to its outside and to its outsiders), and artistic and pedagogical practices as new archives and action which contextualizes experience and incarnates knowledge.

Tilted pedagogies refer to acts aimed for open classrooms, inclined towards collective thinking. The tilting figure derives from some childhood memories in amusement parks, particularly a ride called 'tilt-a-whirl', which spins at such speed that the body is clinched, so that its weight and gravity are felt. The 'tilt-a-whirl' consists of freely-spinning cars that hold three or four riders each, which are attached at fixed pivot points on a rotating platform. As the platform rotates, parts of the platform are raised and lowered, with the resulting centrifugal and gravitational forces on the cars causing them to spin in different directions and at variable speeds. The weight of passengers in these cars (as well as the weight distribution) may intensify or dampen the spinning motion of the cars, adding to the unpredictable nature of the motion.

They are numerous references of this kind of theorizing and thinking in Anzaldúa's work, especially in the one developed later in her life in the texts reedited by Ana Lous Keating in *Light in the Dark*, but not only.

Using a multidisciplinary approach and a 'storytelling' format, I theorize my own and others' struggles for representation, identity, self-inscription, and creative expression. When I 'speak' myself in creative and theoretical writings, I constantly shift position – which means taking into account ideological remolinos (whirlwinds), cultural dissonance, and the convergence of competing worlds (Anzaldúa 2015b: 3).

"El remolino", the whirl or the vortex as Anzaldúa describes "el remolino", derives from "un arrebatamiento con la fuerza de un hacha" (Anzaldúa 2015b: 16). This whirl "cracks [...] our perceptions of the world, how do we relate to it, how do we engage with it" (Anzaldúa 2015b: 16). It can be read also as a radical shift. The shift gives space to *Nepantla*, "a psychological, liminal space between the way things had been and an unknown future" (Anzaldúa 2015b: 17). Here we may appreciate both the shift, the hard-wearing displacement in and the unknown as

¹⁸ That is, students who are the first in their family to go to college.

deferred future, a wide open one. It is in *Nepantla* as site for critique, where whirling and deferment appear with strategic potentialities, as we can see in the way Anzaldúa defines this site:

In nepantla we realize that realities clash, authority figures of the various groups demand contradictory commitments, and we and others have failed living up to idealized goals. We're caught in remolinos (vortexes), each with different, often contradictory forms of cognition, perspectives, worldviews, belief systems – all occupying the transitional Nepantla space (Anzaldúa 2015b: 17).

Tilting pedagogies act in consonance with Anzaldúa's maneuvers which interrupt academic and disciplinary construction of meaning by the activation of other knowledges, of indigenous knowledges, and through the production of what remains unaccountable and unaccounted.

One of the events that remains unaccountable is –without a doubt– the disappearance of the 43 students of Ayotzinapa, Guerrero.¹⁹ This atrocity represented an incommensurable event that could not be assimilated neither by academics, activists, citizenship, nor by intellectuals, workers or students. It caused profuse production of demonstrations, protesting, articles, books, performances and most importantly the production of an inclined classroom, tilted towards the production of *conocimiento* as a set of actions that can make the disappeared appear. 43 chairs were left empty inside a deserted classroom. The continuous demand of apparition of the 43 students does not mean their actual magical presence, but the apparition of pedagogies that can make academia twist and incline towards urgent actions.

Cristina Rivera Garza is an intellectual that resonates with Anzaldúa's pedagogical maneuvers as inclinations to understand knowledge as the capacity to act and to activate academic knowledge. Rivera Garza has developed a type of writing derived from this urgent need and an aesthetic and pedagogical urge to make the disappeared appear; in other words to make an absence present. With other intellectuals such as Elena Poniatowska, Mónica Ocampo, Paula Mónac, José Luis Tapia, Sara Uribe, Ileana Diéguez and many others, she developed a kind of writing very close to what Anzaldúa defines as *conocimiento*, called *narrativa desaproporcionista* (desappropriated narratives), which exercises a kind of written representation of an incommensurable event – the tragic disappearance of 43 rural students – that may interrupt both the appropriation of the voices of the victims and of the disappeared, and the institutional way of simulating justice. To make the absence of the 43 students present there

¹⁹ On September 26th in 2014, 43 rural students of the Rural School *Normal Isidro Burgos* in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero disappeared after they took three buses to travel from Guerrero to Mexico City, to participate in the demonstration organized to remember the 1968 massacre of students (Matanza de Tlatelolco). It is not clear what happened, but significant evidence points out to the intervention of organized crime in confabulation with the military in their disappearance. During months one of the images that traveled internationally was one of a deserted classroom, with 43 empty chairs. See Ocampo / Tapia (2015).

is an urgent need to interconnect academia with activism, visual with written languages, theory with actions that can protest against violence and to foster languages that connect with the pain of others. In Rivera Garza's words resonating with Anzaldúa, the way to "heal" is to interconnect academic language with aesthetic, spiritual, poetic and political one:

Se trata, [...] de un libro sobre el dolor. Alrededor de él. En su centro. Se trata de palabras sueltas y palabras tomadas, de oraciones gramaticales, espirituales y estéticas, de párrafos concatenados que intentan, a su vez, concatenarse a otros fuera de la página, en la calle de nuestros días, en las voces que van a parar, tumultuosas, en los pabellones de nuestras orejas (Rivera Garza 2015: 19f.).

The strong call for appearance is especially meaningful in territories where violence is causing young students to disappear. The dramatic and forced disappearance of the 43 students from Ayotzinapa, Guerrero in Mexico in 2014, and the empty classroom they left, deepened a big national wound.

Classrooms could be the spaces that may guarantee appearance as a form of visibility that could prevent students from disappearing. Since the 43 students of Ayotzinapa, the absence and disappearance of students, the empty chairs inside the classroom, especially in dangerous territories, are consistently visibilized. The insistence in the errant, deferred and open classroom represents a strategy for constructing the necessary perspectives and inclination to make visible both what was impossible to see and perceive in a horizontal academia and the necessary crossings over and inclinations towards friction that revolves learning, generates connections of bodies, disciplines, archives and pedagogies an incarnation of knowledge as *conocimiento*: a way of being and knowing that is seeking another form of order, inhabiting various grounds of language and encompassing the convergence of competing worlds, which may establish hidden, unknown connections between lived experiences and theoretical languages.

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