

Preface and Acknowledgments

The seedlings for this project emerged as poems the year Gloria E. Anzaldúa died and morphed into the scholarly version of my hopeful effort to do what she called “work that matters.” Many pages of this book were written or revised while I stared out at the waves from my cherished spot on the Gulf of Mexico amid the laughing gulls, brown pelicans, roseate spoonbills, and Ridley sea turtles of Padre Island. The Gulf has always been there for me, through several degrees, through unexpected upheavals as well as joys.

During the making of this book, my altar grew increasingly crowded after the death of several dear friends, including several writer friends who had urged me to write more. Ana Sisnett, Raúl Salinas, Camile Pahwa, Chinwe Odeluga, Amy Young, Devin Zimmerman, Laura Padilla, and Maggie Jochild left indelible marks. And my colleagues Cynthia Hawkins and Catherine Kasper will be missed. Ana Sisnett, in particular, would have relished holding this book in her hands and telling me why it matters.

Ana would have keenly understood how it was not merely my engagement with literature and queer theory but also my own engagement with gender variance that certainly informs this work. Like my own gender journey, this book has had many iterations and transformations. Perhaps this book grew from being a curious tomboy to a studious girly teen to a well-meaning young butch to a genderqueer butch Xicanx academic with an extensive collection of guayaberas and wingtips.

During the course of writing this book, shifting terms and times have made it challenging to attend to the many nuances and

neologisms of LGBTQ+ vernacular. Some of the terms used in this book did not exist or were not in wide circulation when I first began the initial research. Indeed, innovative new terms, concepts, and movements may emerge before the ink dries, and that is part of the excitement of this work.

Throughout this process I have been particularly thankful for the activist and community spaces I have been able to call home deep in the heart of Texas, especially allgo, a statewide queer people of color organization. All the folks at the queer bailes, protests, vigils, committee meetings, workshops, fund-raisers, and tamaladas over the years have taught me what it means to make space for and to fight for vibrant queer and transgender people of color lives. It was through allgo that I have met many cherished mentors and long-term members of my queer familia. In particular, Sharon Bridgforth's insightful guidance and loving friendship have shaped my commitment to writing and working in community.

I am deeply grateful to the amazing writers and artists whose work I discuss in this book. Many of them generously shared their time and wisdom, including Adelina Anthony, Helena María Viramontes, and Deb Esquenazi. Helena graciously visited my Latina feminist theories class at Syracuse University, and Deb invited me to participate in a screening and talkback to discuss her film at her San Antonio premiere of *Southwest of Salem*.

Along the way, I have been able to share this work as it has developed in various venues, including conferences and journals. A version of chapter 2 first appeared in *Latino Studies* 12.1 (2014). A portion of chapter 3 was previously published in *Revue LISA* 21.2 (2013) in a special issue titled *Latinotopia*, edited by Francisco Lomelí and Karen Ikas.

My sincere gratitude must be expressed to dear colleagues and friends who have provided intellectual companionship, feminist collaboration, and tireless support—in particular, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Alison Kafer, Sonia Saldivar-Hull, and Norma Cantú. A special thanks goes to my dissertation committee, including Domino Renee Perez, Ann Cvetkovich, Deborah Paredez, Jose Limón, Matt Richardson, and Lisa Lynne Moore.

Ricky T. Rodríguez must be thanked for his helpful feedback on this project; his suggestions were on point, and his work continues to inspire my own.

Numerous librarians and archivists were quite helpful in locating materials. Christian Kelleher, Carla Alvarez, and several others helped me at the Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas Libraries. A special thanks goes out to AnaLouise Keating of the Gloria E. Anzaldúa Literary Trust for helping me with materials from the Anzaldúa archive. Tom Kreneck and other folks were quite welcoming at the Mary and Jeff Bell Library Special Collections and Archives at Texas A&M University at Corpus Christi.

I developed some of the ideas for this project during my time as a faculty member at Syracuse University. At Syracuse, I had the good fortune to be surrounded and supported by amazing colleagues in women's and gender studies, including Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Minnie Bruce Pratt, Himika Bhattacharya, Dana Olwan, Gwen Pough, Vivian May, Robin Riley, Carolina Vargas, Bekki Orr, Soumitree Gupta, Kwame Otu, and Gohar Siddiqui. The Democratizing Knowledge collective, including Linda Carty, Paula Johnson, Silvio Torres-Saillant, Jackie Orr, Hayley Cavino, Sari Biklen, and others, made my time at Syracuse particularly engaging by providing a much-needed space for collaborating with local community partners and working toward democratizing the academy. Fabulous Syracuse neighbors welcomed my family and me into the university neighborhood. I am deeply grateful for the lovely Shabbat dinners hosted by Julie Gozan and Tom Keck and their family. Gladys McCormick connected me with colleagues and helped me find Mexican food. Sheru and Michael showed me how to use a roof rake to fight off the interminable snow.

I am grateful as well to my colleagues at the University of Texas at San Antonio who have supported my work along the way. Professor Sonja Lanehart, Brackenridge Endowed Chair of Literature and the Humanities, generously sponsored my participation in the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (NCFDD) program, which was instrumental in my finishing this

book. My NCFDD small group members, Jessica, Danielle, Rima, and our coach Ray, provided pivotal support and encouragement.

The jota editorial crew—Anel Flores, Rita Urquijo-Ruiz, and Candace Lopez—kept me engaged in invigorating creative endeavors during this scholarly project. As a member of Macondo, I continue to be grateful to the fabulous Macondo network, including Sandra Cisneros, Ire'ne Lara Silva, Alex Espinoza, John Phillip Santos, and many others. For help with tracking down details for the bibliography and notes, I am indebted to graduate research assistants Megan Nieto, Stephanie Schoellman, and Calvin Hoovestol. I am grateful to all of the students over the years who have made teaching a dynamic adventure where we can think together and challenge each other. I want to give a special shout-out to Risa Cantu, Mary Gonzalez, and Richie Giddens.

I cherish the memories of camaraderie shared at many late-night writing binges at Clementine and other Austin coffee shops with Olga Herrera, Cristina Salinas, Virginia Raymond, María Cruz, and others. Erin Hurt and Hala Herby made our dissertation writing group a pleasure. Elvira Prieto, Crystal Kurzen, and Verónica Martínez-Matsuda modeled a generosity of spirit for which I am appreciative.

I could not have survived without my comadre Brenda Sendejo. Brenda, fellow Tejana scholar and Athena extraordinaire, met me for countless writing sessions, walks, and coffee check-ins; she definitely helped me follow our Windsor Park Elementary school motto “use my time and intelligence wisely.” Much love also goes out to Priscilla Hale, Rose Pulliam, Lorenzo Herrera y Lozano, Orlando Ramirez, Virginia Raymond, Tom Kolker, Ocelotl Mora (aka Jr.), Sheree Ross, Miramar Dichoso, Ixchel Rosal, Lisa Byrd, and the rest of the extensive comadrazgo, queer kin, and loved ones who have helped me see this through. Lilia Rosas of Resistencia and Susan Post of Bookwoman deserve a special mention for continuing to keep the community-based bookstores alive and for hosting events where I could engage with some of the writers I write about in this book.

I do not take for granted my family's love and support. My three uncles—Sammy, Steve, and Mike—have always cheered me

on and cheered me up. Their families have lovingly welcomed me and my own little familia. My in-laws, Roey and Jeff, have always been wonderfully understanding. I am thankful as well to Austin and the Medina cousins near and far.

I could never say enough to thank my mom, Cristina, whose grace under pressure, creativity, and humor are my guiding lights. Mama, I cherish your recent gift of the Star Wars bow tie, but I am especially grateful for your gift of telling me “You look handsome, mija.” Thank you for unconditionally loving me in all my queer-gender variant ways.

The incomparable Jen Margulies, my spouse and coconspirator, surely knows, but I will tell her anyway, that she continues to amaze me with her stunning brilliance and capacious compassion that keep me keepin’ on. Ever since that slow dance at the old-school dyke bar Port in the Storm in Baltimore, Jen continues to be my anchor. Avital literally cheered me on and set an example by writing five books in one week.

Because of all the aforementioned folks and all others who have lent their support, I have been able to complete this project. This book is an offering and a humble invitation to dialogue. I am grateful to all of the people who talked with me about my ideas along the way, and I look forward to the conversations to come.

