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**Putting Literacy in Its Place:
Nomadic Consciousness and the Practice of Transcultural Repositioning**

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It is not the consciousness of men [and women] which determines
their existence, but on the contrary it is their social existence which
determines their consciousness.

Karl Marx

Twenty years as a scholar in the field of literacy studies, thirty years as a writing teacher, and I have finally given up trying to put literacy in its place. Not that I didn't work hard to keep literacy where I thought it belonged. Early on, because my years of training in the public school system had persuaded me that literacy belonged on the page, I would lecture the students in my basic writing classes about spelling, punctuation, mechanics, grammar, syntax, and the five-paragraph essay. Put it there, I would tell my students, on the page where we both can see it. Where I can mark it up and show you what you're doing wrong. And it worked. My students—almost all of whom were from marginalized communities, working class at best, and from some of the worst schools in Chicago—would patiently abide and do as they were told. And because it knew its place all too well at the time, literacy didn't resist; it didn't try to challenge my demand that it sit still long enough so that my students could pass their post-tests and go on with the rest of their lives.

Just as I was becoming bored enough with my literacy-on-the-page perspective to consider leaving the university, to leave teaching altogether, Miguel Palacio, a Puerto Rican colleague who was the only Latino I knew at the time working on a PhD, came along and told me about the work of Donald Murray and Peter Elbow, Marie Ponsot and Rosemary Deen. They all argued that the most productive form of literacy available to us resided in the personal experiences of our students. No need for handbooks. Even professional essays filled with content matter were useless. How could it be otherwise when all we needed to do was to locate literacy in our students' authentic voices, in the original ideas that emerged from their lived experience? Because I was now persuaded that literacy resided in my students, I would ask them to reproduce it in the form of confessional writing. And again, they were able to pass their post-tests and go on with the rest of their lives. Before long, though, the need to play therapist, to address the weighty matters that they began to share with me, to dig deeply into my students' psyches to see what literacy had to say—all this became a different kind of burden. Who was I, after all, to be granted special access to such private matters? Luckily for me, a new way to think about literacy was waiting in the wings, anxious to provide me with what I would later decide, finally, were the very answers I'd been searching for.

It came all at once, as these things are prone to come to those of us in academia, in the form of a book that Miguel Palacio shared with me—Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Pedagogy of the Oppressed, in turn, was followed by a flood of other projects authored by Freire and his supporters here in the United States: Donaldo Macedo, Ira Shor, Peter McLaren, and Henry Giroux. As a Chicano born in a labor camp, raised in segregated housing projects, and educated in public schools that legally prohibited me from using my first language, I suddenly felt as though a veil had been lifted from my eyes. Along with the peasants in Freire's work, I

could honestly speak the words of someone whose consciousness had been truly transformed: “Once I was blind, but now I can see.” In the process, I had also found a new place to put literacy: There on the border between freedom and constraint, between hopelessness and possibility. No longer confined to the page, no longer lurking in my students’ psyches, literacy had been transmogrified into power. Passing a posttest was no longer enough for my students, not when they could now possess the ability to change the world itself.

Armed with the realization that I could empower my students to challenge the authority of the institutions that oppressed us all, I worked to help them break through the culture of silence that had enveloped them for much too long. Along the way, I also taught them to free themselves from the false consciousness that “conditions people to police themselves by internalizing the ideas of the ruling elite” (Shor Critical Teaching 44). Because I often assumed that I was the only one in class who possessed the received wisdom of critical literacy, I also saw it as my responsibility to supply my students with “the necessary tools to reappropriate their history, culture, and language practices” (Freire and Macedo 157). And it worked, at least until my reading in literacy studies, my ethnographic research, and the contradictions I began to experience in the classroom conspired to remind me that “no discourse is inherently liberating or oppressive” (Sawicki 166).

As committed as I was at the time to critical pedagogy, to an ideology that suggested we could actually help our students change the world by first getting them to change themselves, by helping them to achieve a newfound clarity of mind that pierced right through their false assumptions, I discovered that my faith began to falter. For reasons that I did not understand at the time, I was no longer a true believer. This is not to suggest that I was no longer interested in social justice or in finding ways to help my students discover for themselves the best choices

available to them for making their way in the world. Without question, new work in literacy studies that challenged every attempt to put literacy in its place contributed to my new sense that what Joseph Harris has called “narratives of progress” in other contexts had been informing the ways in which I had been interpreting my understanding of literacy—and more specifically, the teaching of writing. Along with this new take on literacy came a new take on consciousness itself, for certainly, the two had now been permanently shackled to one another as a consequence of scholarly work on issues of power and authority.

An Abundance of Literacies

With the 1963 publication of their seminal essay, “The Consequences of Literacy,” Jack Goody and Ian Watt initiated our current and highly-charged conversations about literacy’s place in and relationship to culture. Concerned about an increasing shift to a relativistic perspective among scholars who challenged Lucien Lévy-Bruhl’s contention that there were differences in cognitive capacity between members of different cultures (Street Literacy 29)—what came to be known in later years as the “great divide” theory—Goody and Watt argued instead that such differences were not the result of cognitive capacity but of cognitive development. In their view, the emergence of alphabetic literacy in western cultures had ignited a social revolution that gave birth to a facility among their members for “logic, rationality, objectivity and rational thinking” (Street Social Literacies 76). As a matter of fact, Goody and Watt went so far as to argue that just about every major development in the west, including democracy itself, was a direct consequence of alphabetic literacy. Over the years, such scholars as Ruth Finnegan, Sylvia Scribner, Michael Cole, and Shirley Brice Heath have undertaken meticulous theoretical and ethnographic projects that directly challenge the great divide stance. No one, however, has mounted as explicit and powerful a campaign against it as B. V. Street.

Street began his challenge in 1984 by charging that great divide arguments were grounded in what he described as an autonomous model of literacy. Work in support of that position, Street noted, conceived of literacy as a decontextualized and universal set of skills that do not change from one social setting to another. In addition, the autonomous model of literacy always “represents itself as though it is not a position located ideologically at all, as though it is just natural” (Street Social Literacies 133). In establishing a counter-position, Street developed what he called the ideological model of literacy to refer to work by scholars attempting “to understand literacy in terms of concrete social practices and to theorise it in terms of the ideologies in which different literacies are embedded” (Literacy 95). In a more recent publication, Street explained why he decided to use the term ideological instead of the other available options: “I use the term ‘ideological’ to describe this approach, rather than less contentious or loaded terms such as ‘cultural’, or ‘sociological’, etc., because it signals quite explicitly that literacy practices are aspects not only of ‘culture’ but also of power structures” (Social Literacies 161). In an effort to encourage additional research in this vein, Street co-founded the New Literacy Studies Group, a collection of scholars from across the world who are united by the view that literacies, rather than the singular and monolithic concept of literacy, “only make sense when studied in the context of social and cultural (and we can add historical, political and economic) practices of which they are but a part” (Gee 180).

While the shift in thinking of literacy in the plural to highlight the existence of several literacies in any social or cultural scene has complicated our understanding of literacy in ways that make our work more productive, members of the New Literacy Studies group recently insisted that the concept still needed a bit more tweaking. Multiple literacies, Street noted, do not take us much further than the notion of multiple cultures has done in some manifestations of

multicultural studies. Yes, the "notion of multiple literacies is crucial in challenging the autonomous model," Street argued, but "once you slip into the notion of multiple literacies you then begin to move towards culture as a listed inventory." In other words, it becomes next to impossible to avoid "recreating the reified list—here's a culture, here's a literacy; here's another culture, here's another literacy" (Social Literacies 134). It comes as no surprise, then, that members of the New Literacy Studies Group—Brian Street, David Barton, Mary Hamilton, and James Gee among them—have proposed a new term that attempts to address some of these shortcomings: the notion of situated literacies (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic). This reorientation clearly makes sense in light of the fact that the situatedness of any literacy is highly nuanced and that there is always more than one literacy being practiced by members of any community at any given time.

From Critical to Nomadic Consciousness

In his ongoing critique of various conceptions of literacy, Street has voiced concerns about critical literacy as well. In addition to challenging proponents of critical literacy in the United States for being too theoretical and ungrounded, Street has lamented the fact that they are too authoritarian in practice and conceptualize power as quantity rather than process. And he's not alone. A growing number of progressive teachers and theorists, including David Buckingham and Bill Green,¹ have raised their own serious concerns about the pedagogical practices recommended and the theoretical views espoused by proponents of critical literacy. Chief among the pedagogical quandaries is critical literacy's tendency to situate the teacher as hero, as the only individual in the classroom who has achieved critical consciousness and whose job it now is to enlighten his or her students so that they can be transformed and emancipated. In addition to challenging the male tenor of critical literacy, feminists in particular contend that the language of

empowerment that informs critical literacy needs to be used more cautiously and reflexively (Luke and Gore 11). Jennifer Gore, for example, employs Foucault's concept of "regimes of truth" to challenge the conception of power as property that underlies critical literacy; she argues that power as action is a more productive construction because it's more likely to avoid the troubling binaries that emerge in the former.

At the heart of these critiques, I would argue, is the highly problematic formulation of critical consciousness by proponents of critical literacy as something that some people possess and others need to acquire. As I see it, two major problems emerge as a consequence of this position:

- 1) Power is possessed by those who always already possess critical consciousness—teachers, labor activists, and community organizers—and whose job it is to create conditions under which the uninitiated—students, workers, and community residents—can attain it.
- 2) It presupposes that others—again, students, workers, and community residents—do not possess power because they don't possess critical consciousness, are unable to acquire it on their own, and therefore must go through a highly regimented program developed and administered by those who already possess both.

Whether conceptions of critical consciousness are based on the ideas of Herbert Marcuse, Paulo Freire, or Antonio Gramsci seems to make little difference. Each in his own way posits a rigidly linear and developmental stage model informed by a "narrative of progress."

Each model, for instance, begins with the assumption that an individual possesses a complete absence of authentic insight. A false consciousness, proponents who align themselves with Marcuse call it. Not real. A figment of the dominated imagination. A product of "reified

social relations . . . invested with a repressive ideology of control and false needs . . . that permeate the everyday” (Luke 27). Or, in Freire’s words, a naïve consciousness. The first stage: Intransitive thought. Where “people live fatalistically, thinking their fate is out of their hands.” The second stage: Semi-transitive thought. “Where people exercise some thought and action for change. Partly empowered, they act to change things and make a difference, but they relate to problems one at a time in isolation, rather than seeing the whole system underlying any single issue.” And, finally, the third stage: Critical transitivity. Where “the individual sees herself or himself making the changes needed. A critically transitive thinker feels empowered to think and to act on the conditions around her or him, and relates those conditions to the larger contexts of power” (Shor Critical Teaching 32). Proponents of a Gramscian perspective call it a contradictory consciousness, which consists of two theoretical consciousnesses: “[O]ne which is implicit in [a worker’s] activity and which in reality unites him with all his fellow-workers in the practical transformation of the real world; and one, superficially explicit or verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed . . . [Contradictory consciousness, Gramsci tells us, is] the first stage towards a further progressive self-consciousness in which theory and practice will finally become one” (333-4).

In an essay titled “Critical Self-Consciousness, Or Can We Know What We’re Doing?” Stanley Fish provides us with an opportunity to rethink certain aspects of these models:

Awareness is not a quantity that can be increased or diminished on an absolute scale; rather, it is a name for what is obvious and perspicuous to us situated as we are within a structure of beliefs. When our beliefs change—when the assumptions within which the possibilities of seeing, saying, and acting emerge are no longer what they were—the category of the obvious and perspicuous—of that of which we are aware—will have

changed, too; but the change will not be from a state of unreflective slavery to a state of self-awareness, but from one state of self-awareness to another. (462)

In his analysis, Fish goes to great pains to argue that there is no qualitative difference between different states of self-awareness. One moment, he seems to suggest, is just like any other moment. I would disagree. The fact that we all experience epiphanies, moments when we think we understand something that we didn't before, is an undeniable reality. It is, in a sense, the engine that drives our pursuit of knowledge. Without it, education would have little meaning. In that sense, I have no quarrel with the basic idea that what we call critical consciousness is that moment when we think we know something that we didn't know before, something that is both personally and politically significant..

At the same time, I want to argue that the change from an unreflective state of mind to a state of self-awareness is neither linear nor progressive. Too often, our suggestion that it is leads our students to assume that there is a definitive end to any line of inquiry, that if only they think hard enough and critically enough they will succeed in stripping the false veneer from someone else's mistaken version of reality and in so doing will achieve a permanent state of understanding no longer open to negotiation. The danger here is that, in so doing, they may well cross the fine line that separates an ideologically-motivated seeker from an ideologue. In short, they will stop thinking. In an effort to avoid this short-circuiting of the very critical process we all value, I want to introduce the notion of a nomadic consciousness to highlight the fact that no one among us ever achieves such a heightened state of consciousness that we no longer have any place to go. At best, most of us engage in social practices and experience social conditions that lead to various forms of consciousness—naïve, nostalgic, contradictory, and critical, among them—that follow no predetermined sequence. Depending on the social circumstances and how we choose

to situate ourselves in their midst, what Fish calls our structures of belief, we are likely find our way—so to speak—as often as we stumble.

A Changing Awareness of Social Existence

As someone who was born in rural Mexico and only attained a sixth grade education there, María Isabel—a young woman who is a member of the social network of Mexicano families that I've been working with for almost fourteen years—is in many ways typical of the kind of individual who is often depicted as possessing a false consciousness. In 1992, shortly after arriving in Chicago at the age of 18, Isabel decided to marry a young man she had been dating in her small, rural community in central Mexico. Early in the course of their marriage, Isabel took advantage of the opportunity to work for a few months in a factory in Chicago but eventually opted to stay home and raise the four children she and her husband have had over the years. While she made an effort to study English at a community center at the outset of their marriage and even made plans to obtain a high school equivalency diploma in Spanish, Isabel was soon overwhelmed by the responsibilities of motherhood and what some would characterize as the oppressive nature of the patriarchal system in which she grew up. A bright and articulate young woman, Isabel made the kinds of choices that someone in possession of a critical consciousness would likely not have made. In a series of personal narratives that depict key moments in her life, however, Isabel readily disrupts these easy, stereotypical characterizations and illustrates the fundamental nature of a nomadic consciousness.

Despite its limited use of punctuation and an overabundance of misspellings, Isabel's writing demonstrates that she is capable of representing her life in very sophisticated language that betrays a cadence and syntactical maturity of someone well versed in the use of the written word. Moreover, Isabel exhibits a rhetorical awareness that effectively highlights a life of the

mind that is in turn naïve, nostalgic, contradictory, and critical. In the course of the 32 pages of writing that she produced for and shared with me, Isabel depicts a series of moments in her life that reveal the degrees to which her social existence indeed influences the shape that her consciousness takes. What I find most revealing is the way in which Isabel's narrative violates the assumptions of many scholars in critical pedagogy: Isabel's unfolding consciousness does not move inexorably from a false or naïve perspective to a self-reflective and critical one; instead, it jumps unsteadily and unpredictably between and among a variety of possibilities. In her narrative, Isabel vividly illustrates how we can experience a socially critical moment of consciousness at age 7, naïve and nostalgic moments at 15, and again critical and contradictory ones at 20. There are other shifts in awareness illustrated in her writing, but these will have to suffice because of the limited space and time available.

When Isabel began first grade, the rancho (a small rural community of subsistence farmers) in Mexico where she was raised only had one teacher serving its children. As a consequence, she and classmates who wanted to continue their education were forced to attend schools in surrounding communities the following year. As the older Isabel who wrote the narrative recalls that time in her life, she notes that even as a child she was critically aware of the fact that she and the other children from her rancho had a right to an education:

la maestra [en esa escuela] nos preguntaba como nos sentiamos estando en otro lado con otros niños que no conosiamos y que nos asian sentir que no estabamos en nuestra casa pero poco a poco comensamos a notar que tambien teniamos derecho de esa casa porque para todas coperaciones que pedia la escuela nuestro padres siempre las daban y mas que los mismos de ahi

[The teacher (in that school) would ask us how we felt about being there with children that we didn't know and who made us feel that we weren't in our own home. But little by little, we began to notice that we also had a right to be in that house because our parents always gave—and more than those from there—all the contributions the school requested.]²

Over the course of the next three years, Isabel recalls, the older women of her rancho organized themselves with the help of a new teacher and demanded that the local government provide additional teachers for their children:

El maestro nuevo que llevo iso una gunta para que las mamás sacaran de los Ranchos enque estabamos estudiando a los niños y así todos guntos ir a pedir otros maestros y así fue [que] la escuela tubo tres maestros

[The new teacher who arrived organized a meeting so that the mothers would take the children out of the ranchos where we were studying and in this way we could go together to ask for more teachers. And this is how the school ended up with three teachers.]

That a child of seven would participate knowingly in these kinds of struggles, much less be aware of what it meant to do so, is a testament to the fact that critical awareness³ is not the exclusive prerogative of older individuals who have earned it by progressing invariably from a false to a critical consciousness.

Moreover, once experienced, a critical awareness does not automatically become something one possesses on a permanent basis thereafter. Because our awareness is always changing, it is just as likely to shift from a critical to a naïve, a nostalgic, even a contradictory perspective, depending on the social circumstances of the moment and the way an individual

elects to position herself in relation to those circumstances. When at the age of 15 she was preparing to leave her rancho and travel to Chicago for the first time in her life, for example, Isabel was understandably overwhelmed by the emotion of the moment and revealed a naïve consciousness that elided the difficult conditions under which she and her family had been living:

Al momento de comensar a empear nuestras cosas todo lo estavamos aciendo sin ganas sin deseos saliamos a sentarnos afuera de nuestra casa mirando para todos lados como queriendo que todo esto no fuera mas que un sueno que al momento de despertar todo fuera la vida rutinaria que llevamos hoy pero no era asi recuerdo que era un Sabado 22 de febrero de 1992 a las 12 de la tarde cuando estabamos saliendo de nuestro Rancho Recuerdo que yo Sali llorando y pidiendole a dios que me permitiera pronto regresar

[When we started packing our things, we were doing it all without drive, without desire.

We would go sit outside our house, looking this way and that as though hoping that all this was no more than a dream, that upon waking up everything would be the routine life that we're living today. But it wasn't like that. I remember that it was a Saturday, the 22nd of February 1992 at twelve o'clock in the afternoon when we were leaving our rancho. I remember that I left crying and asking God to let me return soon.]

Shortly after arriving in Chicago, Isabel immediately faced the contradictions between what she thought the city would be like and the circumstances she actually encountered: “todo er tan different a come desia la gente era una ciudad llena de basura . . . y lo unico que mirarmos era basur didrios y paderes rallads por ganeros” [Everything was so different from what the people said. It was a city full of garbage . . . And the only thing we saw was garbage,

broken glass, and walls scrawled on by gang members.] Isabel was so overwhelmed by what she witnessed that she immediately waxed nostalgic in the course of comparing their living conditions there with those they had left behind: “todavía no nos borabamos de la mente el rancho y lo que abiamos dejado alla. . . . yo me ponía a pensar si eso era lo que abiamos cambiado por el Rancho que estava mejor“ [we still hadn't erased the rancho from our minds and what we had left behind. . . . I would start to wonder if that was what we had exchanged for the rancho, which was better.] Not surprisingly, Isabel experienced a changing awareness as a consequence of the prevailing circumstances that disrupted any opportunity for her to establish a critical stance.

When she returns to the rancho to attend her brother's wedding more than a year later, Isabel encounters an incident that highlights the experience of wrestling with another contradiction, one that she is willing and able to challenge despite the obvious ramifications:

Segimos con el baile que aunque yo lla estaba pedida en matrimonio y despues do eso las muchachas no pueden bailar mas que con el novio pero como yo no lo tenia alli me olvide de eso y comense a bailar sin parar asta que termino . . . yo como pense que no iba atener mas oportunidades le segui la corriente

[We went ahead to the dance even though I was already engaged and after that the young women can't dance with anyone but their fiancé. But since I didn't have him there, I forgot about that and I started to dance without stopping until it was over. . . . Since I thought I wouldn't be having any more opportunities, I went with the flow.]

In effect, Isabel was caught in the tension between fulfilling the general expectations of her community and her own desire for pleasure. Unbeknown to her, members of the community

gossiped afterwards about what they saw as her crass violation of their shared standards of propriety. In the end, however, Isabel decided to challenge traditional expectations and in so doing demonstrated her ability to respond to a contradiction in an active and self-reflective manner.

Life Outside the Matrix

In the midst of an abundance of literacies that demand a reconsideration of the world-at-large and a reconfiguration of consciousness that travels well across the intersecting boundaries that Chicanos and Chicanas, Mexicanos and Mexicanas must learn to negotiate, it has been my observation that members of our communities are in a position to develop a rhetorical practice that mainstream dwellers who rarely venture outside the matrices of their own safe houses are not as likely to cultivate. Because of their prevailing life circumstances, many members of our communities must often develop and enact this, not as a consequence of formal instruction in schools, but out of a specific and felt everyday need to navigate the “diasporic movements and transnational circuits of culture” (Gutierrez-Jones 1) at the core of their postmodern experience as border dwellers. This emerging habit of mind, which I refer to as the rhetorical practice of transcultural repositioning, is effectively illustrated in Vivian Zamel’s work on how second language writers enact what Fernando Ortiz first referred to as transculturation, and in Min-Zhan Lu’s work on the important function of repositioning in the discursive lives of basic writers.

Transcultural repositioning is a rhetorical ability that members of our community often enact intuitively but must learn to self-consciously regulate, if they hope to move back and forth more productively between and among different languages and dialects, different social classes, different cultural and artistic forms, different ways of seeing and thinking about the increasingly fluid and hybridized world emerging all around us. Epistemologically, transcultural repositioning

is grounded on “the foundation of difference” that informs the work of such poststructuralist feminists as Carmen Luke and Jennifer Gore. Because their stance “makes conceptual space for difference in subject location, identity and knowledges,” it recognizes the indeterminacy “that lies in its rejection of certainty promised by modernist discourses, a rejection of a self-certain and singular subject, and a rejection of knowledges that promise answers which lead to closure.” And because their epistemology “accepts that knowledge is always provisional, open-ended and relational. . . , our treks through language and master narratives on the way to this kind of knowing are located in historical and cultural context” (7).

In the course of developing a better understanding of the society we as Chicanos and Chicanas, Mexicanos and Mexicanas are actively transforming through our sheer numbers, we need to learn to appreciate the wealth of rhetorical knowledge—especially the ability to use situated literacies and a nomadic consciousness as tools for engaging in transcultural repositioning—that members of our communities already have at their disposal. At the same time, because I don’t want to suggest that the ability to engage in this rhetorical practice is some sort of panacea, we need to recognize just how difficult the process is. We also need to make sure students from our communities do not assume that transcultural repositioning involves the simple ability to adapt to any situation in a chameleon-like fashion. To do so would be to risk having them become what Lu calls “discursive schizophrenics” (20). Finally, because everything is dangerous, there is always a price to be paid for engaging in the critical practice of transcultural repositioning. I’m convinced, however, that the benefits and rewards students will reap from expanding their repertoire of rhetorical strategies will be worth their time and effort, not only because it will change them, but because they in turn will change whatever social or cultural scenes they inhabit as they make their way through life outside the matrix.

Endnotes

¹In a personal communication, Catherine McDonald succinctly describes post-critical theory and related perspectives in the following manner: “These positions often value the student’s native practices and beliefs more highly than does an unproblematized criticalist stance. . . . ; some go so far as to say that a criticalist agenda is a value-laden, positivist position. While these writers [who take a post-critical stance] might be called postmodernists or criticalists themselves, they seem to be postmodernists who see agency and criticalists who don’t impose their ideologies.”

²In transcribing excerpts from Isabel’s narrative, I left misspellings and other surface errors as originally written for the sake of Spanish readers interested in examining her writing style. I included a missing word or phrase in brackets only in cases where the meaning may not have been clear. In translating the excerpts, I edited for spelling, punctuation, and the use of lower and upper case letters, both to highlight the content rather than the form and because many of these linguistic features are difficult to translate directly. I made every effort not to edit for grammar or syntax.

³The immediate response of some readers to what I’m suggesting here is, of course, that a child of 7 is incapable of achieving much less enacting a critical consciousness. In point of fact, they’re likely to argue that the 21 year-old Isabel who is recalling this moment in the course of writing her narrative is rhetorically attributing her 7-year old self with this ability. Even if that is true, the fact that Isabel’s younger version both acknowledges and participates in (and, yes, we only have the older version’s take on this as well) the older women’s action, this potentially implicates her in the possibility itself. Moreover, Isabel’s recollection of this period in her life seems to be both cognitive and bodily: “fueron unos anos dificiles porque los ninos de ese lugar no nos aseptaban no miraban com unos estranos y nos desian muchas cosas ubo ocasiones enque cuando no nos dejaban de molestar me tube que pelear a golpes con algunos ninos. . . . y amenasada de muerte me tenian según desian que cuando fuéramos en el camino nos iban a agarrar a pedradas ala ves teniamos miedo pero con las ganas de estudiar que teniamos segimos llendo [They were some difficult years because the children from that place didn’t accept us. They considered us strangers and would tell us many things. There were occasions when they wouldn’t stop bothering us. I came to physical blows with some of the children. . . . And scared to death they had me. They would often say that they were going to stone us when we were on the road. At the time we were afraid, but because of our desire to learn we kept going.] Finally, others may argue that this at best is an example of what Shor calls a semi-transitive rather than a critically transitive consciousness. I would agree. For that reason, I use the term “critical awareness” rather than “critical consciousness” at this point in the text.

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