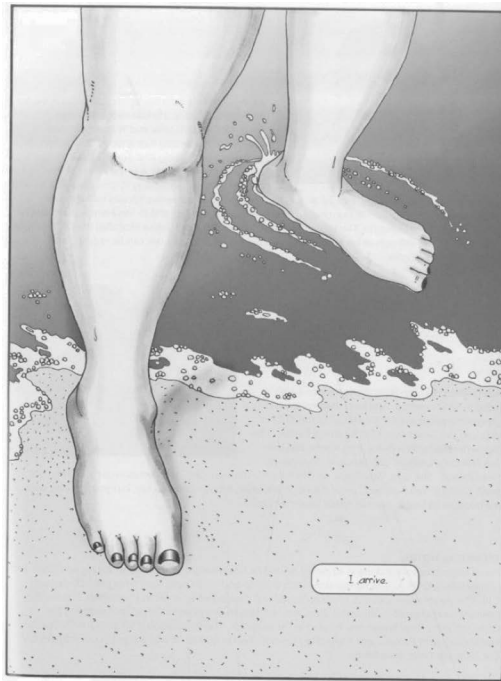


Figure 29

Cortez, *Sexile/Sexilio* 65

5.4 BY WAY OF CONCLUSION: READING *SEXILE/SEXILIO* FROM A PLACE OF (RELATIVE) PRIVILEGE

To all the rest of us, who do not share Adela's experiences, or at least not all of them, *Sexile/Sexilio* extends a generous invitation to check our assumptions, read carefully, and learn. We are invited to laugh with Adela, to admire her wit and courage, and to hold our breath for her when she encounters yet another challenge. We are not invited, however – in fact, *Sexile/Sexilio* does not allow us – to feel pity for Adela. As Susan Sontag observes in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, "So far as we feel sympathy, we feel we are not accomplices to what caused the suffering. Our sympathy proclaims our innocence as well as our impotence" (102). As people who hold more privilege than Adela we are not innocent with regard to the systems of oppression she faces. Quite to the contrary, we uphold

them and benefit from them in many different ways. By centering Adela's agency, her resilience, and her creativity, *Sexile/Sexilio* makes it impossible for white readers to adopt a condescending stance of pity or sympathy that would allow us to see our own place of privilege as unrelated to the marginalization Adela faces. Adela's portrayal in *Sexile/Sexilio* thus stands in sharp contrast to other narratives about trans People of Color such as the documentary *Les travesties pleurent aussi*, which portrays the lives of Ecuadorian trans sex workers in Paris for the benefit of outside spectators, who are positioned as unlike and more privileged than the film's protagonists. Aizura analyzed that the film thus "reproduces the terms of a liberal humanist ethnographic gaze that displaces [the protagonists] agency onto spectators, who are incited to 'do something'" ("Trans Feminine Value" 138f). *Sexile/Sexilio* does not ask more privileged readers 'to do' anything in particular about the systems of oppression that Adela has to navigate. In fact, I would argue, *Sexile/Sexilio* primarily asks more privileged readers to do less: to stop centering our own experiences and perspectives; to stop acting as if we are experts on what the lives of more marginalized people are like, on what they need, on what they should do; to stop treating them as if they need our help and cannot speak for themselves. In short, *Sexile/Sexilio* asks its more privileged readers to stop perpetuating homonationalist discourses and to begin to relate to the world differently.

Sexile/Sexilio also gives an indication of what relating to the world differently might look like: It asks us to see, honor, and respect the lives of LGBTIQ people in the Global South as well as the lives of LGBTIQ People of Color in the Global North. It asks us to let our white narratives be disrupted by the voices we excluded. Listening to Adela's story, it becomes clear that the offer of inclusion is not extended equally to all LGBTIQ people and that those who remain on the margins will not benefit from white gay men telling their coming out stories or from homonormative activism for marriage equality. *Sexile/Sexilio* reminds more privileged readers that the struggle against cis_hetero_sexism is currently no more urgent than the fight against economic exploitation and marginalization, racism, colonialism, and imperialism. It asks us to center the experiences, knowledge, and leadership of LGBTIQ people in the Global South and LGBTIQ People of Color in the Global North in order to pursue an intersectional approach that can help us avoid the usual white narratives and forms of white LGBTIQ politics that inevitably contribute to the further marginalization of people like Adela.

