



Bridging Common Grounds: Metaphor, Multitude, and Chicana Third Space Feminism

Cathryn Josefina Merla-Watson¹

Texas A&M University, San Antonio
Division of Arts & Sciences
cathryn.watson@gmail.com

Abstract

In this article I argue the conceptualization of the multitude as a diffuse network and the attendant archipelagic metaphors in the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri as well as related Autonomous Marxist scholarship belie the vital role of identity and difference in social organizing under Empire or global capitalism. In order to energize these archipelagic metaphors and to flesh out Autonomous Marxist theory and praxis, I suggest this theory take cue from Chicana third space feminism, specifically Gloria Anzaldúa's metaphor and praxis of "bridging," which foregrounds the significance of identity and difference in contingently connecting to and moving with others in pursuit of being in common.

Introduction

The work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in addition to specific Autonomous Marxist scholarship collectively attempts to theorize Empire, the real subsumption of all social life under global postmodern capitalism and the multitude, a rhizomatic form of social organization embodying the potential to work *within* and *against* Empire. However, this conceptualization of the multitude, an ostensible collective "living flesh," fails to recognize the importance of identity and difference regarding the activation of its "constituent power," how and why



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particular bodies aggregate in pursuit of being in common. This effacing of difference, I argue, is reflected in and exacerbated through this collective scholarship's conceptualization of the multitude as diffuse networks and through the attendant metaphor of archipelago, which presumes a priori common ground, obscuring the variegated and uneven lived experiences of global postmodern capitalism. Moreover, through these homogenizing metaphors this body of work unintentionally calls upon and reproduces liberal multiculturalism, making it seem as though we all experience capitalism identically.

In this article I critically connect or "bridge" the work of Hardt and Negri and Autonomous Marxist theorizations to Chicana third space feminism, particularly the work of Gloria Anzaldúa, concerning issues of identity and social organizing under Empire. Rather than deploying dead metaphors (metaphors evacuated of their symbolic force) of the archipelago, I suggest incorporating Anzaldúa's multi-inflected metaphor of bridging, which foregrounds the significance of identity, difference, and the body in social organizing so as to more effectively connect and move with others. I contend, finally, that utilizing Autonomous Marxist theory and practice within U.S. critical geography and beyond requires nothing less than an act of bridging between various bodies of social theory.

Identifying the Multitude

In *Empire* Hardt and Negri (2000) imagine the current regime of imperial politics as "a great sea that only the winds and currents move" (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 354), a form of global capitalism that saturates all forms of cooperation. In contradistinction to previous forms of imperialism and European colonialism, which relied on the acquisition of territory and the delimiting of margin and center, Empire functions as a "new global form of sovereignty" comprised of "national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule": "It is a *decentered* and *deterritorializing* apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers" (Hardt and Negri, 2000, xii). This new iteration of economic and cultural sovereignty, they point out, is evident in the increasingly rapid production and exchange of money, goods, services, and information across nation-state borders, signaling a shift from the primacy of industrial or material labor to the central role of affective, intelligent, or immaterial labor. Through the real subsumption or total co-optation of human creative capacities by immaterial labor, Empire functions as an "artificial horizon" (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 354) that renders impossible a constitutive outside or alternative to this new form of sovereignty. As such, Hardt and Negri understand this postmodernization of the global economy as ontological, a fact of contemporary political and social life, inexorably engulfing us all within its "smooth world" (Hardt and Negri, 2000, xiii).

Hardt and Negri further argue that through this "becoming common of labor" or the production of the common global conditions of labor, Empire also guarantees its own demise in its generation of a rhizomatic and diffuse network, the

multitude. This counter-empire always already embodies a constituent power that may be activated in pursuit of common social and political objectives. In contrast to “the people,” a homogenous social body readily interpellated by the nation-state or sovereign power, the multitude is a “living flesh” comprised of heterogeneous singularities, an irreducible multiplicity that eludes logics of representation, sovereignty, and hegemony. And whereas “the people” act as a coherent and hierarchical political body, the multitude functions as a horizontal configuration of power, “a plane of singularities, an open set of relations” (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 103), capable of organizing itself and making decisions. Hardt and Negri explain: “The multitude, designates an active social subject, which acts on the basis of what the singularities share in common. The multitude is an internally different, multiple social subject whose constitution and action is based not on identity or unity...but on what it has in common” (Hardt and Negri, 2004, 100). The multitude, an ongoing process of being in common does not refer to traditional notions of community or organic unity, but rather indicates a contingent process of “*communication* among singularities and emerges through the collaborative social processes of production” (Hardt and Negri, 2004, 204). Immanent to the multitude is the potential for “absolute democracy,” the potential to organize and act within and against Empire so as to transform and exceed its constituent horizons.

One of the most powerful and promising yet inadequately theorized aspects of Hardt and Negri’s conceptualization of the multitude, to my mind, is their articulation of love, which contingently binds and brings together individuals in a social movement, a force in excess that Empire may never fully capture within its permeating grasp. Their articulation of love gestures toward how the multitude is not readymade, but rather is actively co-constructed as a radically heterogeneous being in common. It not a question of “*being* the multitude” but rather one of “*making* the multitude” (Hardt and Negri, 2009, 169), for it is “a being that is not fixed or static but constantly transformed, enriched, constituted by a process of making” as well as “an uninterrupted process of collective self-transformation” (Hardt and Negri, 2009, 173). A practice rife with *potentia*, love is “ineluctably common” and “refuses to be privatized or enclosed and remains constantly open to all” (Hardt and Negri, 2009, 181). In opposition to constricted bourgeois notions of romantic love, Hardt and Negri’s definition of love stimulates and catalyzes “constituent power” from within the “common content” of the multitude. The authors thus point toward a more “generous” concept of love that “means precisely that our expansive encounters and continuous collaborations bring us joy” (Hardt and Negri, 2009, 351), or a “surplus common” (Casarino, 2008) always already in excess of Empire and moving toward shimmering horizons of possibility. However, this reformulation of love unintentionally elucidates what the concept of the multitude makes invisible: the labor of love, the complex negotiations based in embodied subjectivities—modes of being that are forged differentially under Empire—required in the composition of social movements.

As well, though Hardt and Negri powerfully articulate the saturation of immaterial labor and the reproduction of the multitude, this concept of postmodern capitalism misguidedly projects that Empire engulfs us all in a homogenous manner on a global scale. This becoming common of labor occludes how Empire works through categories of identity, which are informed by particular spaces and histories (see also Brennan, 2003; Clough, 2003; Quinby, 2003). Absent is a coherent explanation as to why individuals move within and against particular social positions under Empire in addition to what compels social movements to aggregate and articulate with other movements. The multitude falsely assumes a universal common ground that we all tread and experience equally and an automatic desire to resist Empire irrespective of identity—as opposed to working through identity to address and bridge various oppressions or the differential subjectivities compounded by and produced through Empire. And although Hardt and Negri distinguish between *common being* and *being in common* so as to emphasize how the multitude embodies the capacity for the latter, which is processual and excessive (versus static and containable), the authors reinscribe the multitude within common being by delineating the multitude as strictly a class concept. In doing so, the authors foreclose in advance the *potentia* of the multitude, the capacity of the multitude to harness what is actually *in common* through denigrating identity and difference. What is ostensibly *beyond measure* is therefore prematurely delimited.

Because the multitude presumes common conditions of labor, Italian feminist Marxist scholar Silvia Federici (2008) asserts, this concept fails to adequately account for the differential relations embedded within Empire. The multitude actually homogenizes the conditions of labor, she notes, because it does not incorporate how capitalist development ensures capitalist underdevelopment, thereby obscuring the ways in which Empire is indeed uneven and experienced differentially according to identity. Far from indexing an inclusive social multiplicity within this new form of “communicative capitalism” (Dean, 2009), the multitude selectively describes a technological capitalist elite who is parasitical upon material forms of labor:

What Hardt and Negri do not see is that the tremendous leap in technology required by the computerization of work and the integration of information into the work process has been paid at the cost of a tremendous increase of exploitation at the other end of the process. There is a continuum between the computer worker and the worker in the Congo who digs coltan with his hands trying to seek out a living after being expropriated, pauperized, by repeated rounds of structural adjustment and repeated theft of his community’s land and natural resources. (Federici, 2008)

As well, Federici argues that Hardt and Negri’s notion of affective labor, which she points out is mistakenly conflated with “immaterial” labor because it does not produce tangible products or objects, in actuality conceals the particularity and

materiality of women's labor, such as reproductive labor in addition to other specific exploitations within the contemporary global economy (see also Schultz, 2006). This inattention to various forms of difference coupled with the way in which the multitude takes for granted the becoming common of labor, she argues, further deepens the fissures within the working class rather than overcoming them. Due to this significant oversight, Federici concludes, the homogenizing "cauldron of the Multitude" proves to be an insufficient analytic and organizational concept to understand the differential subjectivities produced through Empire as well as its uneven terrain of development and unequal access to technology (see also Camfield, 2007).

What Federici concomitantly calls attention to through her critique of the "cauldron of the Multitude" is its promotion of a liberal multiculturalist "melting pot" ideology in addition to troublesome metaphors concerning the multitude that imagine a global village identically experiencing this "enormous sea" (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 60) of Empire. And even though Hardt and Negri argue the common conditions of labor do not signal sameness and unity, but rather differences in degree, such as "specific types of labor, forms of life, and geographical location" that "do not prohibit communication and collaboration in a common political project" (Hardt and Negri, 2004, 106), they remain reticent on the vital role of identity or subjectivity, how and why it is precisely that individuals in various geographic locations are compelled to collectively move within and against Empire.

The Multitude: A Singular Concept

Giving rise to Hardt and Negri's and related Autonomous Marxism's inadequate conceptualization of the multitude as a diffuse constellation is a narrow focus on class and their related reformulation of identity as singularity that assimilates identity into the multitude. Curiously, Hardt and Negri have claimed their focus on class functions as a "corrective" to the "fact that no new ideas have emerged that are adequate to address the crisis [of the Left]" (Hardt and Negri, 2004, 219-20). And yet, there is indeed abundant scholarship emerging from various fields and disciplines, especially in ethnic, American, feminist and queer studies, and feminist geography that collectively enunciates a more complex and porous account of identity politics than what is misappropriated and partially assembled by Hardt and Negri.

Further, Hardt and Negri's hollow conceptualization of identity politics is based in a presumed opposition between essentialism and postmodernism, constricting potential for radically deploying identity in pursuit of realizing the constituent power of the multitude. Chicana literary and ethnic studies scholar Paula Moya (2000) elaborates:

Recently, discussions about identity have become predictable and unilluminating precisely because their terms have remained fixed within opposing "postmodernist" and "essentialist" positions (where

the latter is constructed as the basis for a naïve identity politics). Neither of the two opposing positions has proved adequate to the task of explaining the social, political, and epistemic significance of identities. Essentialist conceptions, which tend to see the meanings generated by experience as “self-evident” and existing identities as “natural,” are unable to account for some of the most salient features of actual identities. They have been unable to explain the internal heterogeneity of groups, the multiple and sometimes contradictory constitution of individuals, and the possibility of change—both cultural and at the level of individual personal identity. In turn, postmodernist conceptions—which tend to deny that identities either refer to or are causally influenced by the social world—have been unable to evaluate the legitimacy or illegitimacy of different identity claims. Because postmodernists are reluctant to admit that identities refer outward (with varying degrees of accuracy) to our shared world, they see all identities as arbitrary and as unconnected to social and economic structures. (Moya, 2000, 10-11)

Scholars such as Paula Moya (2000, 2002) and others involved in The Future of Minority Studies Research Project (FMS), a transnational and interdisciplinary network of scholars, have instead argued to understand identity through “postpositivist realism” to foreground the multiple ways in which identity is fluid or flexible, yet real, a meaningful and embodied experience of contemporary social life. Hardt and Negri, on the other hand, subscribe to the myopic logic described by Moya through which they understand categories of identity as inherently essentializing and therefore divisive: their logic follows that the assertion of identity automatically severs individuals and groups from one another, creating an impasse in the progression toward being in common. Their caricature of identity as staid and discrete unfairly renders it vulnerable to postmodern deconstructive critique. And when Hardt and Negri do engage the role of difference or the lived experience of various forms of identity and oppression through “different cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations” (2004, xiv) under empire, they ultimately flatten out and homogenize difference as interchangeable “singularities,” merely different forms of labor within the multitude, ignoring the differential terrains of power that difference exacts.

Unlike the working class, which is based on exclusions Hardt and Negri insist, the multitude is conceived as a social multiplicity, a plurality of freely expressed identities that operate *in common* with one another (2004, 106). “A concept with a long history in European thought, from Duns Scotus and Spinoza to Nietzsche and Deleuze” (Hardt and Negri, 2009, 338), a singularity indicates a non-essentialized and evolving complex composition, as each singularity is comprised of a multiplicity of singularities and can only exist in relationship to other singularities. Because of these qualities, the singularity unlike identity is revolutionary in that it *moves* to dismantle the immovable logic of private property:

“What identity is to property, singularity is to the common” (Hardt and Negri, 2009, 339). Whereas identity in this analogy is considered static, finite, delimited, and reactionary, the singularity is understood as dynamic, infinite, open, and revolutionary. And though internally different, to reiterate, the multitude is capable of organizing and comporting itself as a singular body or “living flesh” in pursuit of a common political objective. It is a body without history for it needs only to look to its “own present productive power for the means necessary to lead toward its constitution as a political subject” (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 396). Through their deployment of the singularity, a de-historicized and deterritorialized mode of being, though, the authors reconstitute the very universal subject of orthodox Marxism they decry (Beverly, 2004, 12-13).

In their most recent book, *Commonwealth* (2009), Hardt and Negri elaborate identity-as-singularity as necessarily a stage through which revolutionary politics must temporarily inhabit and extend beyond toward the realization of the common. Engaging Spinoza’s “parallelism,” which “maintains that there exist infinite attributes through which substance is expressed in parallel” (Hardt and Negri, 2009, 343), Hardt and Negri argue infusing identity politics are “parallel revolutionary streams of thought and practice” that “aim toward the abolition of identity” (Hardt and Negri, 2009, 326). Hardt and Negri then proceed to draw a parallel between identity and “traditional communist discourse” concerning private property due to that “the rule of property is a means of creating identity and maintaining hierarchy” (Hardt and Negri, 2009, 326). They elaborate:

The initial positive task of identity politics in the various domains is thus to combat [color] blindness and make visible the brutally real but too often hidden mechanisms and regimes of social subordination, segmentation, and exclusion that operate along identity lines. Making visible the subordinations of identity as property implies, in a certain sense, reappropriating identity. This first task of identity politics might thus be placed in the position that *the expropriation of the expropriators* fills in traditional communist discourse. (Hardt and Negri, 2009, 329)

And so like private property, they assert, identity must be reclaimed and then systematically dismantled. “Too often, however,” continue Hardt and Negri, “identity politics begins and ends with this first task, sometimes combining it with pallid declarations of pride and affirmation” (Hardt and Negri, 2009, 329). Identity politics is thus not only apprehended as a temporary stage *en route* to activating the constituent power of the multitude, but also elaborated as a reactionary practice enacted by naïve subjects.

Pursuant to this argument of identity as a way station in the path of revolutionary becoming, Hardt and Negri also misread and misappropriate the scholarship of various critical race and queer theorists. In the same chapter, the authors misconstrue the work of queer of color performance studies scholar José

Muñoz in service of proving how identity is simply a stage toward its self-abolition. Hardt and Negri's one-sentence explanation of Muñoz's concept "disidentification" as a mechanism that operates to "abolish (or at least destabilize and problematize)" gender identity distorts the meaning and complexity of this concept, erroneously suggesting the primary trajectory of disidentification is to dismantle and decode identity. Yet, in fact, disidentification "is a step further than cracking open the code of the majority; it proceeds to use this code as raw material for representing a disempowered politics or positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture" (Muñoz, 1999, 31). In other words, disidentification simultaneously deconstructs identity while also productively reconstructing it, highlighting the transformative potential of identity located in its ambivalent oscillation or "shuffling back and forth" between stability and instability. Disidentification produces identities that "have failed to turn around to the 'Hey, you there!' interpellating call of heteronormativity" (Muñoz, 1999, 33). In Muñoz's original formulation, identity is reexamined and rearticulated—not thrown by the wayside, as Hardt and Negri project it.

Also in the same chapter, Hardt and Negri misrepresent the creative and scholarly work of Gloria Anzaldúa in their use of the following quote, included as an epigraph from Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* ([1987] 1999), to claim that identity functions as an immanent critique of itself: "As a mestiza I have no country, my homeland cast me out...(As a lesbian I have no race, my own people disclaim me; but I am all races because there is the queer in me in all races.)" (Hardt and Negri, 2009, 325). However, like the concept of disidentification for Muñoz, the term "queer" for Anzaldúa is not purely deconstructive or a rejection of identity politics. What directly follows this quote, and not included in the epigraph, suggests another understanding of "queer" in the capacity of formulating a more fluid, inclusive, yet particular, "culture" that extends beyond Eurocentric dualisms: "I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and the planet" (Anzaldúa, [1987] 1999, 103). In a previous chapter, Anzaldúa explicitly states that her "Chicana identity is grounded in the Indian woman's history of resistance" (Anzaldúa, [1987] 1999, 43), a specific gendered and racialized genealogy and imaginary rooted in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands. While Anzaldúa conceptualizes identity as processual and dynamic, identity for her additionally names a particular lived experience inflected by race, class, gender, sexuality, citizenship, and geography.

Finally, in addition to misrepresenting queer of color theorizations of identity, Hardt and Negri opportunistically mine postmodern feminist theory in buttressing their specious claim that identity solely operates as a reactive formation or social injury and therefore must be jettisoned in the journey toward the common. Calling upon feminist scholar Wendy Brown's controversial argument from the mid-1990s that identity functions as a "wounded attachment" or a "state of injury," which has since been widely critiqued by feminist scholarship, particularly by

radical women of color scholars, Hardt and Negri assert that identity only enunciates social grievance, and is therefore limited and informed by that which it names and critiques. Formulated as such, identity politics is only useful insofar as making visible social injury and then promptly discarding it in the actualization of the social and political capacities of the multitude. In tandem with the work of Brown, Hardt and Negri also deploy related theorizations of Judith Butler and Donna Haraway from the early 1990s to argue how identity may be wielded to the purpose of its own destabilization and ultimate undoing. However, Hardt and Negri once again willfully omit powerful critiques of Brown, Butler, and Haraway as well as ignore more recent reformulations of identity as not simply reactive, but also productive: that is, the way in which identity forges meanings and relationships that extend beyond “social injury” (see, for example, Moya, 2000).

And so, while the multitude, an “expanded” concept of class, attempts to articulate new abstractions of labor and social organizing under the conditions of Empire, it demotes the role of identity through positing difference as an essentializing epistemology that is temporary and reactive. Identity, though, significantly embodies and identifies specific power relationships that inform (and are informed by) race, class, gender, or sexuality, among other categories, that require sustained and evolving engagement and self-reflection concerning the various power positions we occupy. Identity, in other words, fleshes out the multitude, articulates its modes of differentiation, and gives us insight into the material dynamics of social organization and organizing.

(Pre)Figuring Collective Action: Autonomy and Archipelagos

This misapprehension of identity politics in the work of Hardt and Negri and the resulting erasure of the complex desires that motivate individuals or “singularities” to organize into resistive diffuse constellations also reverberates throughout cognate Autonomous Marxist scholarship, which understands the multitude through the corresponding metaphor of archipelago. Naturalizing political commitments and affiliations among singularities, this metaphor figures resistance as horizontal networks through which struggle is connected by a common base. This figuration, I contend, though, eclipses the very tectonics of social movement, the very stuff of the body—history, memory, and desire—that compel individuals to shift, move, and coalesce, prematurely foreclosing liberatory politics and praxis. While I do not have the space here to examine Autonomous Marxism’s diverse genealogies and scholarship, I selectively mine specific texts to illustrate how the utilization of natural metaphors reflect and reinforce exclusionary practices in both the development and dispersion of Italian *Autonomia* as well as present articulations of Autonomous Marxism. In the introduction to *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics*, Sylvère Lotringer and Christian Marazzi (2007) suggest a fluid and archipelagic body in their conceptualization of *autonomia*’s historical framework: It “is a way of acting collectively. It is made up of a number of organs and fluid organizations characterized by the refusal to separate economics from politics, and politics from existence. Autonomy never unified” (Lotringer and

Marazzi, 2007, 9). Yet as the editors endeavor to trace the confluences and diffusion of Italian autonomy they give scant attention to the power relations and dynamics animating the (dis)articulations of these organs or islands, eliding the rifts and differential tectonics in the development of Italian autonomy. Lotringer and Marazzi additionally assert: “There is nothing ‘Italian’ about class warfare in Italy; here is nothing ‘original’ in the Italian theoretical contributions. If any, their specificity resides in the fact that in Italy these theories have been able to bloom and develop thanks to the class struggles and their formidable continuity” (Lotringer and Marazzi, 2007, 12). However, the editors give only passing mention to Detroit-based African American activist James Boggs’s *American Revolution* (1963) to emphasize the need to “rediscover the history of American class warfare” (Lotringer and Marazzi, 2007, 13). They disregard, too, that in the late 1960s Potere Operaio (PO) established links with the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, who sought to organize a revolutionary movement outside of the traditional rank and file structure, and PO, who was “still in its factory-oriented stage,” failed to incorporate issues of race in their re-definition of class, relegating race to “a specific stratum of the workforce” (Wright, 2002, 133). PO thus “failed to draw any positive lessons from the work of Black militants beyond the shopfloor, arguing that the level of class struggle was superior in Europe” (Wright, 2002, 133).

The introduction to *Autonomia* additionally remains mute concerning the marginalization of gender and sexual domination in the late 1960s and early 1970s by the PO’s class politics. The Italian feminist Marxist organization Lotta Femminista (“Feminist Struggle”) formed by Silvia Federici underlined (and continues to do so) the way in which labor is gendered, such as through biological reproduction and “housework,” and brought to light the nationalist, misogynist, and racist practices of the male workers’ hegemony within PO. Although not terming it as such, this group significantly produced early articulations of intersectionality, the way in which categories of identity or oppression overlap and mutually inform one another. The “point of view of struggle” (as quoted in Wright, 2002, 134), Lotta Femminista proposed in 1972, is to identify rifts within social organization that sanction asymmetrical power relations within a movement. “Today this question,” Lotta Femminista concludes, “is one of the fundamental questions that the class must confront” (Wright, 2002, 134). Lotta Femminista asserted that by ignoring the diverse and complex constitution of class, the male workers in PO risked alienating other segments of the working class. However, these critiques concerning particularity waged by Lotta Femminista were derided by PO as instruments of capitalism that created class fissures within PO. And parallel to PO’s experience with the League, PO—at this critical juncture of reformulating a more flexible “class composition”—also failed to make tension or contradiction within the organization productive or positive. *Autonomia*, in parallel, through its silences and omissions concerning issues of identity and difference, also fails to acknowledge such tensions, further embedding and naturalizing asymmetrical power relationships within present and future Autonomist thought and organizing.

In the introduction to *The Constituent Imagination: Militant Investigations, Collective Theorization*, editors Stephen Shukaitis and David Graeber (2007) utilize the metaphor of the archipelago to naturalize particular relationships of power in their elaboration of “constituent power” as that which:

emerges most fully and readily when these institutional structures are shattered, peeling back bursts of time for collective reshaping of social life. It is from these moments that archipelagos of rupture are connected through subterranean tunnels and hidden histories, from which one can draw materials, concepts, and tools that can help guide us today, wherever we might find ourselves. (Shukaitis and Graeber, 2007, 32)

While this book offers exciting perspectives on how to conduct new collaborative forms of research under Empire, it nonetheless refuses to systematically engage the actual dynamics, power relationships, or identity politics involved in the “collective reshaping of social life.” For example, although Shukaitis and Graeber note that Autonomist theory is “so obviously a collective creation” (Shukaitis and Graeber, 2007, 28), they strangely refuse to engage diverse theorizations of identity in their genealogies of Autonomist theory, other than passing mention of the contributions of identity politics espoused by the new social movements beginning in the late 1960s. Echoing Hardt and Negri’s privileging of select postmodern theorists, moreover, Shukaitis and Graeber purport that North American universities are “no longer producing any social theory the rest of the world is particularly interested in,” except for most recently “possibly Judith Butler” (Shukaitis and Graeber, 2007, 14). And only pages later, the editors declare feminism a failed movement, proclaiming it was co-opted and sold back to women by the current form of capitalism (Shukaitis and Graeber, 2007, 28), as if *the* movement were dead in the water and only informed by second wave feminism of the 1960s and 1970s, a largely white middle class movement focused on obtaining “equal rights” rather than articulating systemic critique. The editors’ myopic archipelagic framework for conceptualizing Autonomous Marxism thus makes invisible rich and complex theorizations of identity and difference emerging from contemporary U.S. feminist and critical theory as well as limits the possibilities for Autonomous Marxist research and theory. Through this exclusionary framing of social organizing, Shukaitis and Graeber consequently paint a picture (along with Hardt and Negri) of liberal multiculturalism, which global postmodern capitalism has created a fluid global playing field in which we are all equal contenders.

Chicana/o cultural studies scholar Chela Sandoval (2000) argues this squashing of difference through horizontal metaphors enacts “a new kind of democratization of oppression” that in actuality erases, and thus exacerbates, categories of oppression:

Because they [categories of identity] are horizontally located, it appears as if such politicized identities-as-positions can equally access their

own racial-, sexual-, national-, or gender-unique forms of social power. Such constituencies are then perceived as speaking “democratically” to and against each other in a lateral, horizontal—not pyramidal—exchange, although from *spatially* differing geographic, class, age, sex, race, or gender locations. (Sandoval, 2000, 73-74).

In this way, horizontal metaphors of archipelagoes fail to render the depth, history, and significance of identity and the physical or lived experience of identity in social organizing. Similar to Sandoval’s critique of horizontal conceptions of power, Chicana historian Emma Pérez (1999) critiques Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s concept of the BwO (body without organs)—“a fluid, mobile texture affected by a multiplicity of pleasures” (Pérez, 1999, 105)— by arguing that the BwO, in its privileging of surfaces and the sensorial, disregard the history, memory, and depth of desire, or the embodied nature of desire. She asserts that desire not only propels revolution but also conceives “desire as revolution” (Pérez, 1999, 105), insinuating that desire is a historical and embodied process. She provocatively poses, “How can historical erasure be revolutionary?” (Pérez, 1999, 107). The metaphor of archipelago therefore bypasses the body, and effectively erases the role of history, memory, and desire in social organizing.

Metaphors, of course, do not passively reflect a discrete immutable reality, but rather are an active function of language intimately informing how we perceive and interact within the vibrant lived world (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). They shape how we make sense of the world and how the world shapes our own subjectivities, how we relate and connect to others. Metaphors *matter* in that they harbor the potential to articulate common experiences in addition to bridging and reckoning with difference and power relationships. And while the work of Hardt and Negri and cognate Autonomous Marxist literature fails to take seriously the implications of identity politics or difference, and the power relationships that undergird these categories of analysis, it is not my intent here to dismiss this body of work wholesale. In fact, I find innovative, promising, and energizing Autonomous Marxist concepts concerning experimentation, movement, and contingency in regard to social transformation. I consequently suggest Autonomous Marxism take cue from Chicana third space feminism’s shifting metaphor of bridging, for it is my hope that placing these two bodies of social theory into conversation will begin to yield more complexly composed and liberatory social movements.

Connecting Bodies of Theory: Bridge, Drawbridge, Sandbar, or Island

Despite important differences, Chicana third space feminism, the work of Hardt and Negri and Autonomous Marxism traverse common conceptual domains in respect to their rich theorizations of radical movement and social transformation. Chicana third space feminism, though, foregrounds the importance of difference and how it animates the kinds of movements and political ties or affinities individuals and communities desire. The notion of third space practice, however, is

not isolated to Chicana feminist theory, but rather overlaps with other theoretical trajectories ranging from postcolonial critique, radical (Third World) women of color theory, French poststructuralist theory, to radical geography (Soja, 1996). And while Chicana third space feminism references mainly the collective work of Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, Chela Sandoval, Emma Pérez, whose theorizations emerge and respond to the socio-historical and physical space of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, it arose in part from the scholarly and creative collaborations among radical women of color and allies in the watershed anthologies *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981), *Making Face, Making Soul Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color* (1990), and *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation* (2002). It is mainly in her prefatory remarks and in the introductions to these texts, in addition to a related lecture, where Anzaldúa most explicitly carves out a theoretical and practical framework of bridging to foster dialog across categories of difference to promote alliance and coalitional building.

For Anzaldúa, metaphor is itself a mechanism of bridging, an embodied methodology for reflectively connecting to others and a form of self-preservation:

We preserve ourselves through metaphor; through metaphor we protect ourselves. The resistance to change in a person is in direct proportion to the number of dead metaphors that person carries. But we can also change ourselves through metaphor. And, most importantly, attempt to put, in words, the flow of some of our internal pictures, sounds, sensations, and feelings... (Anzaldúa, [1990] 2009b, 122)

Bridging, a simultaneously metaphorical and material practice, enables individuals to connect to others so as to transform and shift the boundaries between self and other without effacing various histories, desires, and differences. Bridging takes work and does not provide comfortable or safe spaces. It is a “theory in the flesh,” what Chicana lesbian feminist Cherríe Moraga, describes as “politic born out of necessity,” a theory that “uses flesh and blood experiences” to vivify political action (Moraga, 1981a, 23). While Moraga and Anzaldúa speak to the lived experiences of radical women of color and the need to form alliances beyond their own cultural communities, however defined, I contend that the metaphor of bridging proves instructive to critical geography and radical social theory more generally in its articulation of the labor and intensive self-reflection required in effecting meaningful social thought and action. In the remainder of this section, I examine Anzaldúa’s framing of the aforementioned anthologies in respect to bridging and a related lecture to more fully elaborate this metaphor in relationship to social organizing.

Cohering various writings by radical women of color, the groundbreaking anthology *This Bridge Called My Back* ([1981] 1983) sought to forge links among these diverse individuals. This anthology and the two that follow are remarkable in terms of the editors’ capacity to self-reflect and, simply put, to change their minds, to pressure their own respective comfortable and safe spaces. For example, three

years later, in the foreword to the second edition to *This Bridge Called My Back*, co-editor Cherríe Moraga reflects on the anthology's limitations, noting that if she were to compile the anthology again in 1983, she would have included perspectives by men of color, gay and heterosexual, and international views to render a more holistic picture concerning the specific oppressions that contour the lived experiences of Third World women of color. Despite this misstep, Moraga nonetheless recognizes the importance of beginning with the perspective of only U.S. woman of color and on "relationships *between women*" (Moraga, [1981] 1983, foreword to *This Bridge*), and how this choice functioned to build a platform from which to begin and extend outwards. In the subsequent foreword to this edition, Anzaldúa echoes Moraga concern for inclusion as "we are not alone in our struggles nor separate nor autonomous but that we—white black straight queer female male—are connected and interdependent" (Anzaldúa, [1981] 1983, foreword to *This Bridge*). Anzaldúa, though, underscores the risk of bridging, how the "weight of this burden" may "break our backs" if we are not careful to share this labor of connecting to others and entering their lives. It is a shared labor of acknowledging and incorporating differential histories that have shaped identity and social positioning. This is a labor, though, that requires response and responsibility, one that must be enacted contingently and continually, collectively making bridges as we go.

The work of bridging is never automatic, given—it is actively co-constructed and maintained. This work is demanding physically, intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and consequently we cannot always participate in this process of connection: we cannot always be activists, someone who is "active" in alliance building and is "engaged in a political quest" (Anzaldúa, [1988] 2009a, 141). Sometimes we need a "break," a temporary respite and cutting off, however partially, from this demanding process. In her 1988 lecture entitled "Bridge, Drawbridge, Sandbar, or Island" delivered during the Lesbian Plenary Session at the National Women's Studies Association, Anzaldúa explores the challenges of building alliances among and beyond lesbians of color, and emphasizes, "there is no such thing as a common ground" and that "we all stand on different plots," albeit "shifting" ones (Anzaldúa, [1988] 2009a, 149). And while she emphasizes the necessity of forging connections to others, she also underlines the need to temporarily withdraw from this work and to reenergize. Common ground, in Anzaldúa's figuration, is never natural or immanent:

Earthquake country, these feminisms. Like a fracture in the Earth's crust splitting rock, like a splitting rock itself, the quakes shift different categories of women past each other so that we cease to match, and are forever disaligned—colored from white, Jewish from colored, lesbian from straight. If we indeed do not have one common ground, but only shifting plots, how can we work and live and love together? Then, too, let us not forget la mierda between us, a mountain of caca that keeps us from "seeing" each other, being with each other. (Anzaldúa, [1988] 2009a 141)

Through acknowledging the potential for working toward common grounds, Anzaldúa refuses to naturalize affinities among women, foregrounding instead differential histories or “la mierda” that keep women and individuals divided, “the shit” we must collectively excavate and work through to activate meaningful and viable modes of connection.

Implicitly casting off ossified and dead metaphor of common ground or base, which occludes the actual labor of forging connections through difference and identity, Anzaldúa outlines four shifting methodologies or metaphors for engaging the lived world: bridge, drawbridge, sandbar, or island. The work of becoming a bridge entails being a mediator, being able to go beyond binaries, to help locate commonality through difference. The role of drawbridge gives a person two options: either being “down” and being a bridge or withdrawing for a while in order to “recharge” and “nourish ourselves before wading back into the frontlines” (Anzaldúa, [1988] 2009a, 147-48). As women of color who are often tokenized in the academy and in social movements, Anzaldúa observes, we find ourselves “*mediating all time*,” and sometimes being used or “walked on,” and so, once in a while, withdrawing, inhabiting the state of an “island,” a modality of recuperation and survival. Yet, as Anzaldúa underscores, we are never absolutely alone or “totally self-sufficient” (Anzaldúa, [1988] 2009a, 148), but rather we always rely on others to some extent to sustain and define us through various forms of interaction and cooperation.

Performing the very metaphor or methodology she describes, Anzaldúa de- and re-constructs her metaphors as she goes, consciously blending them in a “continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm” (Anzaldúa, [1987] 1999, 102). She models the necessity to continually shift and shake up frozen metaphors, to change one’s mind and position. Toward the end of this overlapping assemblage of metaphors, the “infrastructures of bridge and drawbridge feel too man-made and steel-like” (Anzaldúa, [1988] 2009a, 148) for Anzaldúa, and in seeking a more natural metaphor of bridging, (while acknowledging nature, too, is considered by some to be constructed or man-made) she conceives the “sandbar,” such as the one linking an island to a mainland, a useful and a more egalitarian mode of creating connections and social organizing. Although she “forget[s] what it is called” (Anzaldúa, [1988] 2009a, 148), Anzaldúa maps out an archipelagic formation social body, yet, unlike Autonomous Marxist theorizations, she focuses on *how* islands or “singularities” connect. She elaborates: the important thing is how we shift from bridge to drawbridge to sandbar to island”:

Being a sandbar means getting a breather from being a perpetual bridge without having to withdraw completely. The high and low tides of your life are factors which help you to decide whether or where you’re a sandbar today, tomorrow. It means that you’re functioning as a “bridge” (maybe partially underwater, invisible to others) and that you can somehow choose who you’ll allow to “see” you bridge, who you’ll

allow to walk on your “bridge”-that is, who you’ll make connections with. A sandbar is more fluid and shifts locations, allowing for more mobility and more freedom. Of course there are sandbars called shoals, where boats run amuck. Each option comes with its own dangers. (Anzaldúa, [1988] 2009a, 148)

Even though the sandbar gives lesbians of color more freedom concerning with whom they connect, no structure is innocent or wholly naturalized in Anzaldúa’s use of this archipelagic metaphor: each comes with its respective “dangers” and setbacks no matter how mobile or fluid or changing. But as Anzaldúa asserts in *Making Face, Making Soul* (1990), “our strength lies in shifting perspectives” in “adaptability,” as there is not “one movement, but many” (Anzaldúa, 1990, xxvii).

In the anthology *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*, Anzaldúa (2002), co-editor and contributor, most explicitly enunciates her conceptualization of building bridges, the complex and fluid process of connecting to others in pursuit of social transformation. Unlike *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color* (1981), this anthology, twenty-one years later, purposely includes contributions by non-women of color, such as those by men and white women, building where the previous anthology left off, expanding the dialog concerning the relationship between categories of difference and the feminist movement. She explains this complex act of bridging or building a more inclusive social movement in her essay, “Now let us shift...the path of conocimiento...inner work, public acts” (also included in this anthology): “You remove the old bridge from your back, and though afraid, allow diverse groups to collectively rebuild it, to buttress it with new steel plates, girders, cable bracing, and trusses” (Anzaldúa, 2002a, 574). Fluidity here for Anzaldúa signals the complexities of lived experience in addition to the concrete, yet processual, nature of connecting to others or bridging our various differences. Anzaldúa explains that this anthology “intends to change notions of identity, viewing it as part of a more complex system covering a larger terrain, and demonstrating that the politics of exclusion based on traditional categories diminishes our humanness” (Anzaldúa, 2002b, 2). While still accounting for important differences and diverse relationships to histories of oppression, this anthology strives to build bridges among community, to unearth “commonality within the context of difference” (Anzaldúa, 2002b, 2). It reveals the heterogeneous and relational aspects of categories of identity, including those of whiteness or woman of color. Locating and linking commonality, she reiterates once again, is not a straightforward or comfortable process.

Anzaldúa embarks on this text with a self-reflective description of her wandering along the bluffs at sunset in Santa Cruz “gazing at the shifting sea, a hammered sheet of silver” (Anzaldúa, 2002b, 1). The sea is a metaphor for a shifting liminal space in which she proceeds to bridge the previous anthology with this one. The sea, like the anthologies, represents a shining horizon of possibility, bridging or linking the shore to the infinite skies. Anzaldúa further elaborates:

Bridges are thresholds to other realities, archetypal, primal symbols of shifting consciousness. They are passageways, conduits, and connectors that connote transitioning, crossing borders, and changing perspectives. Bridges span liminal (threshold) spaces between worlds, spaces I call *nepantla*, a Nahuatl word meaning *tierra entre medio*. Transformations that occur in this in-between space, an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries. *Nepantla es tierra desconocida*, and living in this liminal zone means being in a constant state of displacement—an uncomfortable, even alarming feeling...Though this state links us to other ideas, people, and worlds, we feel threatened by these new connections and the change they engender. I think of how feminist ideas and movements are attacked, called unnatural by the ruling powers, when in fact they are ideas whose time has come, ideas as relentless as the waves carving and later eroding stone arches. Change is inevitable; no bridge lasts forever. (Anzaldúa, 2002b, 1)

Anzaldúa's bridge names an uncomfortable process of working toward the common. While all bridges are impermanent and contingent, we must continue to build bridges in and across uncertain and dangerous seas in pursuit of common social being. Bridging may be thus understood as radical act, an insurgency, *haciendo caras*, making waves, within the great and differential seas of Empire. Bridging difference and effecting alliances, Anzaldúa warns, requires understanding one's home as a bridge, in addition to knowing when "to close ranks to those outside our home...and when to keep the gates open" (Anzaldúa, 2002b, 3). It is an uncomfortable, uncertain, and experimental physical and mental space that exceeds blueprints. Bridges do not guarantee safe passage, and at times require profound re-visionings of that ontological ground—or waters—we hold sacred and still.

¡Vámonos!: Theory Uprising

I have connected seemingly antithetical domains of theory here to galvanize what Chela Sandoval (2000) calls the acceleration of theory, that is, "theory uprising," for bridging continually transforms the *we* so that we can more equitably move together. Utilizing Autonomous Marxist theory and practice within U.S. critical geography and beyond requires nothing less than an act of bridging between various bodies and locations of social theory. Bridging Chicana third space feminism, such as the scholarship of Anzaldúa, with the work of Hardt and Negri as well as specific Autonomous Marxist scholarship unearths previously unexamined exclusions and silences within the latter two that necessitate focused engagement, response, and responsibility. Bridging, moreover, demands not only an understanding of how socio-historical conditions of different movements erupt, but also how and why differential movements themselves articulate: that is, an earnest attempt to identify and reckon with all the various frictions and complexities of power embodied in identity. Refusing to acknowledge the multiple

ways in which social organizing is an embodied social act only impoverishes our conceptualizations of social movements, masking how and why it is we move and who comprises the *we*. In closing, I want to propose that bridging might just be a more complex and contingent formation of what Hardt and Negri call “love,” an excessive and processual force that enables and activates social movement: *si se puede, que asi sea, so be it, estamos listas, vámonos/ Now let us shift* (Anzaldúa, 2002, 576).

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