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the contradictory simultaneity of being with others: exploring concepts of time and community in the work of Gloria Anzaldúa

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abstract

While social geographers have convincingly made the case that space is not an external constant, but rather is produced through inter-relations, anthropologists and sociologists have done much to further an understanding of time, as itself constituted through social interaction and inter-relation. Their work suggests that time is not an apolitical background to social life, but shapes how we perceive and relate to others. For those interested in exploring issues such as identity, community and difference, this suggests that attending to how temporal discourses are utilised in relation to these issues is a key task. This article seeks to contribute to an expansion of the debate about time and sociality by contributing an analysis of a variety of ways in which Gloria Anzaldúa utilises temporal concepts as part of her work of rethinking social identity and community. In particular, I suggest that in contesting homogeneous identity, Anzaldúa also implicitly contests linear temporal frameworks. Further, in creating new frameworks for identity, I suggest the possibility of discerning an alternative approach to time in her work that places difference at the heart of simultaneity. I suggest that the interconnection between concepts of time and community within Anzaldúa's work indicates, more broadly, that attempts to rework understandings of relationality must be accompanied by reworked accounts of temporality.

keywords

Anzaldúa; time; community; activism; difference

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Within the West, space and time have traditionally been understood as shaping our sense of how we are with others in two key ways: we are together with others insofar as we occupy the same space; but divided from ourselves and from others due to the movement of time. The assumption that space brings together, while time divides, arises from the idea that different parts of space remain within the same all-encompassing space, whereas different moments of time are necessarily separate. Without the movement of time there would be no change or differentiation, while without the stability and sameness of space there could be no continuity. Of course, things are never as simple as this, as many social geographers have argued. What such assumptions reveal, however, is the key role that seemingly abstract concepts of space and time have in shaping what is meant by sameness, difference, community and individualisation. The central argument of this paper, then, is that attempts to transform what is meant by community or identity are necessarily accompanied by shifts in senses of time and space, even if only implicitly. In the interest of brevity I have chosen to focus particularly on shifts in time, though concepts of space will always be implicated. In particular, I will examine Gloria Anzaldúa's ground-breaking challenges to notions of social identity and political coalition in order to show how they are rooted in implicit challenges to social understandings of time as linear. Specifically, I will suggest that her work challenges the tendency to separate difference out across time and instead utilises a notion of simultaneity that seeks to enable the recognition of difference within the 'same' moment of time.

time and community

As a key writer within US Third World feminism, Gloria Anzaldúa's work seeks to theorise forms of sociality that resist attempts to assimilate difference. Crucial to this attempt is her reworking of the concept of 'community' away from its idealisation as a safe non-threatening group, characterised by similarity in goals and values, ease of communication, comfort and familiarity. This is not to say that Anzaldúa rejects the ideal of community altogether, but rather that she seeks to transform it in two main ways. First, she refuses sameness as an aspirational ideal. Instead, she focuses on the difficult work involved in forming political partnerships and communities that acknowledge the way their members may be divided against each other. Second, these modes of sociality are underpinned by a reworked account of identity. She argues that the false dichotomies offered by traditional models of identity split or fragment complex identities into discrete social categories, which consequently restrict the way we feel ourselves to be connected with the different aspects of ourselves and with others. In so doing, Anzaldúa's work offers a more nuanced understanding of belonging that resists the lure of unity or mathematical ideas of equivalence. I will argue that underlying these critiques of homogeneous community and

categorical identity, are implicit criticisms of linear conceptions of time. However, first I will explore the interconnections between concepts of time and concepts of community.

Although the problems of time and community may at first seem to have little to connect them, one prominent attempt to rethink community explicitly ties the problem of community to the question of temporality. For Iris Marion Young, the erasure of complexity and difference highlighted by Anzaldúa arises from the way a certain understanding of time shapes concepts of community. As she argues in her influential essay 'The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference':

> The ideal of community participates in what Derrida calls the metaphysics of presence or Adorno calls the logic of identity, a metaphysics that denies difference. The ideal of community presumes subjects who are present to themselves and presumes subjects can understand another as they understand themselves. It thus denies the difference between subjects. (1986: 1–2)

Young thus criticises a certain mode of belonging – one based upon the self-presence of subjects to themselves and to each other – for the way it limits who can be regarded as part of the community. Most importantly, Young criticises this mode of belonging because it is itself linked to a certain approach to time.

Therefore, while time can be thought of as that which divides or separates, insofar as we are thought to share time with others, this shared time has primarily been thought in terms of a homogeneous present or presence. That is, the time that we share is thought to be a 'now' that brings differing experiences, histories and anticipations into a certain alignment by virtue of a shared moment in the present. For example, despite the many qualitative differences in each person's life, clock time enables each individual's hour to be standardised as the same hour. The clock allows individuals to assume that, barring error, my 8:15am is aligned with your 8:15am. Linear time, understood as a series of discrete now points, thus potentially offers communities the ability to render individual senses of time commensurable at any moment of the day. What is important to note, however, is that this commensurability is dependent on ignoring difference and focusing, instead, on what can be made homogeneous and uniform. Young thus rejects the ideal of community because of its dependence on an ideal of presence that ignores difference.

What is particularly problematic is that if linear time 'manages' difference by ignoring it and focusing on commensurability, then this mode of relating to difference becomes hidden inasmuch as linear time is thought to be commonsensical or straightforward. 'Time' comes to appear as if it were an inert, yet cohesive, background within which social life, in all its diversity, is negotiated. However, in her intriguing account of the political nature of social time, Carol Greenhouse has suggested that where one way of understanding time is presented as occurring homogeneously across a society, as is overwhelmingly

the case with linear time, this should not be interpreted as 'natural' but rather as a product of social contest (1996: 4). She argues that, in fact, there are always multiple ways of living time within any society, each with their attendant values, which in turn guide different constructions of the past and hopes for the future. She claims that 'the proliferation of times has many causes, some internal, some external. New forms of time are regularly introduced or imposed through people's participation in social institutions, such as work, school, religious or political ritual, or law' (1996: 96). These new time frames differently shape what is viewed as significant, how the flow and directionality of time is understood, as well as how different moments of time are understood to be connected to each other. Greenhouse argues that these different guidelines interact in a variety of ways, competing for dominance, mutually reinforcing each other, or annulling each other.

The understanding of time that dominates a society is not, therefore, an inert apolitical background, but rather is a cultural strategy used to manage the differences between social members and their multiple 'times'. Georges Gurvitch, for example, argued that the multiple times that characterise societies elicit methods for managing this diversity and limiting possible conflicts. Indeed for John Hassard, the importance of Gurvitch's work lies in the way it shows, more generally, how cultures are 'characterised by a melange of conflicting times, and how groups are constantly competing over a choice of appropriate times' (1990: 4). Like Greenhouse then, Gurvitch argued that one consequence of this competition is that 'every society must attempt to unify, even if only relatively, these multiple manifestations of social time and attempt to arrange them in a hierarchy' (1964: 13). What this suggests is that linear time dominates particular societies, not because it is the most scientific or accurate way of telling the time, but because it appears to offer the best resources for managing both 'the logistical and existential challenges of living in the company of others' (Greenhouse, 1996: ix). That is, linear time represents one of the models by which Western societies manage social diversity.

Importantly, Greenhouse suggests that one of the primary ways concepts of linear time are utilised in the management of social differences is by 'redefining incommensurabilities within a single representational system' (1996: 213). That is, she suggests that concepts of linear time are used to foster the belief that diverse ways of living time are actually commensurable when understood in terms of a postulated 'single principle of selection (or a single hierarchy of principles…)' (1989: 1636). This claim is most easily understood in reference to logistical differences. Indeed, with the growing spheres of interaction found in a globalising world, the uniformity and consistency offered by a single standard of time appears as a promising model for dealing with an increasingly diverse global community. Whereas regions once measured time in a variety of ways, making them incommensurable, the provision of standardised time zones, which unite the globe within a single commensurable representational system, has provided an

essential background for increased expansion of trade, travel and communication. However, while standardised time reckoning systems may, indeed, be important for managing the *logistical* challenges of community, enabling accurate transportation schedules, for example, Greenhouse's work suggests that the values that inhere within the notion of a single all-encompassing linear progression of time are not isolated from the *existential* challenges of living in community. That is, her work suggests that representations of time not only provide models for how to manage the timing of different social activities, but also provide models for how the different values and meanings encountered within social life can be managed.

One such model for managing the diversity of values or meanings, which has proven to be particularly problematic within feminist coalition and community work, provides a good example of the way linear models of time feed into broader questions of identity and community. This model arguably builds upon the notion of time as a linear succession of isolated instants, in order to suggest that the best way to deal with political questions is to arrange them hierarchically in order of importance and deal with them one at a time. In other words, the attempt to deal with 'one thing at a time' provides a model for how groups should arrange competing values and meanings, in that the diversity of demands for response can not be responded to 'at once', but must be ordered and arranged in terms of importance. Differences are no longer simultaneous but are separated out and spread across time. While this way of acting may seem logical, it is precisely this particular use of linear metaphors that provide an important, if implicit, focus for Anzaldúa's critical work. As Romand Coles has argued, her work suggests that, 'the world is both too full of myriad modes of subjugation and suffering, and too rich in possibilities of wisdom and thriving, for any single set of principles or teleology to be nearly sufficient for democratic struggle' (2001: 495). What I will now explore is the way her work actively resists the temptation to reduce our understanding of social processes to singular linear accounts. In so doing, she rejects the limitations of a linear time frame and instead seeks to present society as being constituted by multiple conflicting processes that are not entirely commensurable, and yet must be understood as simultaneous.

diversity and simultaneity

In order to discuss my claim that Anzaldúa's work introduces a radical account of simultaneity, I will analyse two well-known passages from her work. The first comes from *This Bridge Called My Back*, and is most often cited in order to show her refusal to engage in traditional politics based on a single group identity (see, for example, Keating, 2006: 6). She writes:

> I am a wind-swayed bridge, a crossroads inhabited by whirlwinds. Gloria, the facilitator. Gloria the mediator, straddling the walls between abysses. 'Your allegiance is to La Raza,

> the Chicano movement,' say the members of my race. 'Your allegiance is to the Third World,' say my Black and Asian friends. 'Your allegiance is to your gender, to women,' say the feminists. Then there's my allegiance to the Gay movement, to the socialist revolution, to the New Age, to magic and the occult. And there's my affinity to literature, to the world of the artist. What am I? *A third world lesbian feminist with Marxist and mystic leanings*. They would chop me up into little fragments and tag each piece with a label. (1983: 205)

While Anzaldúa is without doubt criticising traditional notions of identity, I would like to suggest that what is also at stake here is a certain notion of time. Specifically, Anzaldúa is implicitly rejecting the understanding of time, already discussed above, which suggests that one can only respond to one value or principle at a time.

Arguably, the belief that political demands are best responded to one at a time arises from the notion that time is divisible into single unitary moments or 'nows' within which only one thing can happen at once. Indeed, it is a truism that one can not do two (or three or four) things within the *same* moment or now. As Jacques Derrida comments, in the interview 'Negotiations', 'usually for common sense (which is sometimes philosophy) one cannot make two different gestures and especially two contradictory gestures at once. One cannot do this at the same time. It is not possible' (2002: 23). However, he points out that the claim 'it is not possible' only remains true insofar as one presupposes 'that something like a moment, an instant, a place, and an *I* that is ruled by this unity exist' (*ibid.*). For Anzaldúa such presuppositions are impossible. The wholeness that has traditionally been promised by the 'moment' or the 'instant' is categorically not available to her. Not because she celebrates what has been called post-modern indeterminacy, but because to be whole within a traditional Western metaphysical framework is to be without contradiction. Yet, as she vividly attests, her sense of her own wholeness is cut and fragmented by the social categories used by others to politically situate her. In any one 'moment' she is always already divided by contradictions and called to respond to multiplying demands.

Further, in the above quotation, Anzaldúa suggests that her fragmented experiences can not be grounded within a unified 'place'. The sense of space that the quotation evokes does not fit neatly with a static, unchanging, all-encompassing space that equally contains each of its different parts. Instead, she finds herself in an in-between place, described alternately as a bridge or a crossroads. She is located in the marginal space experienced while travelling from one place to another, a marginality that is further emphasised by her reference to walled abysses. These marginal spaces are not static or stable, rather they are wind-swept and wind-swayed. Thus, without access to either a unified stable place or a unified stable moment Anzaldúa does not appear to be presupposing an 'I' that would be gracefully contained in either a 'place' or a 'moment'.

Indeed, she must ask 'who am I?' and although she answers, she still appears to be highlighting the way her sense of self must continue to be articulated in terms of the categories that fracture and mislabel her. In this way, Anzaldúa challenges each of the presuppositions set out in Derrida's assertion above. As a consequence, her work suggests the need for a sense of time that would not render the attempt to do more than one thing at once automatically impossible. She thus opens the way for a different model of managing competing values and meanings within social life, one that would recognise incommensurabilities simultaneously.

In resisting the division of the social world into homogeneous and discrete categories, and the way such divisions fragment her identity, her political allegiances and her ability to connect with others, Anzaldúa must therefore (even if only implicitly) locate this identity, these allegiances, within another 'time'. That is, she must challenge the mode of managing difference implicit within linear time. A hint at what this other time might be can be located in the second example that I will discuss, which comes from *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Importantly, as I have mentioned above, Anzaldúa does not suggest a generalised dispersal in contrast to the 'moment'. Instead, she searches for ways of 'keeping intact one's shifting and multiple identity and integrity' (1999: 19). In so doing, she is not, however, searching for a lost unity or for a new mode of self-presence underpinned by an understanding of time as a series of 'now' points. As Susan Bickford explains:

> The language of 'refusing the split' may seem to indicate the kind of desire for wholeness that our post-modern eyes are trained to treat suspiciously. But this desire to 'bring together' parts of the self is a response to a political landscape that tries to impose a single piece as the whole. (2001: 67)

Rather, in attempting to bring together communities and individuals that are fragmented by the reductive arithmetical logic of identity, Anzaldúa utilises a quite different logical and temporal framework.

In her attempts to maintain a certain integrity or wholeness, which simultaneously, and yet contradictorily, draw attention to the diversity and multiplicity of social life,[1] Anzaldúa rejects the tendency to range political issues along a single hierarchical line to be dealt with one at a time. She instead seeks a way of being that can respond to heterogeneous demands at the same time. Once again, this is not the 'at the same time', which we are familiar with through the use of the clock, where the qualitative differences of each person's moment are erased by the assumption of an underlying commensurability and uniformity. Rather, Anzaldúa's refusal to split her contradictory heritages, and the political demands each makes upon her, suggests an understanding of simultaneity, where to be 'at the same time' is to resist the desire to purge difference (and social contest) from the

1 Thanks to the anonymous reviewer who suggested this point.

present. Instead, to be coeval (i.e. to live in the same time with another) is to recognise the multiple lines of time and of history that operate within the present, in ways that are not fully commensurable.

The second crucial passage that helps to shed light on what sense of coevalness or being together 'at the same time' might be at work within Anzaldúa's text is one which appears twice in the first section of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, at the beginning as part of a larger poem and at the end, as the final words:

> This land was Mexican once
> was Indian always
> and is.
> And will be again. (1999: 113)

Anzaldúa is here describing her 'community of place', the vague and uncertain land that, in this instance, is represented as Aztlán, the mythical homeland of the Aztec people. The figure of Aztlán has played a key role in the Chicano Movement's attempt to claim national rights to the South-West United States.[2] Anzaldúa, however, subverts the nationalistic overtones that have been part of the work of recuperating Aztlán by suggested a more indeterminate and dis-unified relationship between a land and its peoples.[3] In her treatment, Aztlán does not become the rightful home of a unified people; rather she highlights the way this land has been invaded and re-invaded, home to Native Mexican and American civilisations, Spanish conquistadors and Anglo-Americans. What is interesting is that in announcing the differing, and yet simultaneous, political demands that arise from this turbulent and violent history, she utilises a confusing amalgam of incongruent presents, pasts and futures.

Anzaldúa does not, therefore, assert a linear history of the South-West US, as that which was successively Native American, then Mexican, then part of the US. Instead, she writes a history of the borderlands that affirms and recognises its contradictory historical trajectories simultaneously. In so doing, she is not attempting to manage these diverse histories by rendering them commensurable (in reference to an all-encompassing spatial or temporal background), or by ordering them hierarchically. Rather, Anzaldúa brings attention to continuing, and yet contradictory, claims that can not simply be displaced. She thus calls for an end to the obstinate lapse in memory regarding the US invasion of Mexico and the subsequent occupation of what is now Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and California. Moreover, in seeking to recognise the injustices that are obscured by linear histories of the South-West, she also brings attention to the way, even this recognition, is not itself sufficient, since it also obscures another history – the repeated attempts to dispossess indigenous peoples. While within linear time the rise of a new moment is thought to annul the previous one, for Anzaldúa, the rise of another political claim does not annul all previous claims. This suggests that she rejects linear models for understanding and managing the complexity of

2 For a closer analysis of the mythic, historical and utopian significance of Aztlán see Watts, 2004.

3 A complexity that was denied by the California based 'Save Our State' organisation, who in 2005 protested against a monument in Baldwin Park, bearing Anzaldua's poem, claiming that it was seditious and racist.

social life. Rather, her claim 'was Indian always' suggests that the history upon which indigenous claims are based abides within the present as a past that can never be cancelled out.

Further, one can discern in the above passage the suggestion that doing justice to Mexican and indigenous claims in the present would not guarantee an end to the complex and violent interactions between them or between them and the rest of the US. The promise of continuing complexity and contradiction can be seen in the last two lines, where her recognition of 'what is' is repeated in the future tense. However, 'what is' does not appear in a future tense that would indicate a simple continuation of the present. Rather, in utilising the future perfect, she suggests that the future holds a promise of transformation, a promise of what 'will be again'. Anzaldúa's complex negotiation of this heritage thus suggests the need for communities to be guided by less reductive temporal accounts than the traditional linear histories, which split and divide differences by isolating them within different stages or moments, thus obscuring both the diversity of the present and the continuing claims of the past.[4] But further, her work suggests that the idea that it is only possible to do or be one thing at a time potentially restricts who one is able to be in community with, and thus what kinds of possibilities are open to political community more generally.

4 As María Lugones argues, the illusion of discrete social categories is, in part, attributable to particular representations of time and space, which deny that 'history is shared, conflictual, and in relation to social power' (2003: 198). The contestation of a single linear history in favour of 'multiple historical lines' is thus thought to be one of the key steps that enable the possibility of reconfiguring community as heterogeneous and conflicting (*ibid.*: 201). Consequently, Lugones' own visions of communities as impure and heterogeneous 'are forged in a line of historico-spatial impurity' (*ibid.*).

challenging hegemonic temporal models of activism

So far I have argued that Anzaldua's work challenges the tendency to divide affiliations or loyalties from each other and arrange them separately along a linear time-line. Instead, by arguing for the need to respond to conflicting loyalties at once, she moves from idealisations of unity within the self and the community towards the development of a sense of wholeness that recognises the simultaneity of conflicts, divisions and contradictions. One way of expanding this account of simultaneity, then, is to focus on what it might mean to respond to these conflicting loyalties. Indeed, in this section I will argue that Anzaldúa not only rejects the management of diverse histories through the creation of linear time-lines, she also challenges the tendency within feminism to arrange diverse models of acting in a similar way. Such a tendency is epitomised by the division of feminism into waves, each with a different emphasis and favoured mode of activism. Anzaldua's work again shows how the tendency to divide difference across different moments in time creates exclusionary effects, particularly by restricting one's sense of who one should work with and in what ways. Further, she shows how dividing modes of acting across time periods or phases reduces one's range of options for acting within community. In particular, I see Anzaldúa as criticising the concepts of change and agency that underpin the notion of fixed developmental stages through which individuals or groups must pass in the same

or similar way. This approach has been fundamental to a variety of colonialist discourses, among others, and has problematically shaped what kinds of options for acting and for *inter*acting have appeared to be feasible within a variety of social movements, including certain feminist movements.

To get a better idea of just what these temporal models are and how they impact upon conceptions of community and activism, I will follow Chela Sandoval's analysis of the rejection by US Third World feminists, including Anzaldúa, of what she terms 'feminism's great hegemonic model' (2000: 47–54). In her book *Methodology of the Oppressed*, Sandoval argues that during the 1980s, the desire to consolidate and systematise feminist knowledge led theorists from a range of disciplines to develop a number of similar historical models that 'fast became the official stories by which the women's movement understood itself and its interventions in history' (2000: 47). Some examples Sandoval cites include work by Julia Kristeva (1981), Alison Jaggar (1983) and Toril Moi (1985). Although not all such historical models were exactly alike, Sandoval distinguishes a certain commonality, particularly in the way three 'phases' of feminism are discerned: first a focus on equality with men; secondly on difference from men; and thirdly, propositions of a distinct feminine experience, morality and/or culture.

Importantly, Sandoval points out that these histories are specifically told in terms of shifts in modes of acting, that is, shifts in shared understandings of what kinds of actions bring about change, what kinds of goals should be pursued, and which particular problems are of most relevance for women in a particular time period. In so doing, these accounts of feminism specifically set up a history that is thought in terms of the changes in feminist modes of political activism. The key problem for Sandoval, and for this article, is that these histories are arranged as 'distinct evolutionary phases through which activists pass in their quest to end the subordination of women' (2000: 44).[5] Specifically, in becoming tied to an evolutionary model, these feminist histories do not act merely as accounts of the changes that have occurred within feminist activism over time. Rather, they risk feeding into the broader social connotations of evolutionary metaphors, including the idealisation of progress. By arranging modes of acting within a linear framework, there is the risk that more recent modes come to unproblematically signify increasing sophistication, while older modes are dismissed as inadequate, deficient or obsolete.[6] This has at least two consequences, the first of which is the repetition, within feminism, of the kinds of temporal distancing techniques utilised within the colonial encounter, while the second is that different modes of activism come to be seen as mutually exclusive.

With regards to the first consequence, the linear representation of time suggests that time moves from the past toward the future in a single sequence of non-repeatable moments. While time is supposed to be all encompassing, the progressivist character of linear temporal frameworks has been utilised as a

5 It is not necessarily clear that Kristeva fits with Sandoval's characterisation here, since, in her essay, Kristeva claims that, 'my usage of the word "generation" implies less a chronology that a *signifying space* ... So it can be argued that as of now a third attitude is possible, thus a third generation, which does not exclude – quite the contrary – the *parallel* existence of all three in the same historical time, or even that they be interwoven one with the other' (1981:

33). Though I also note that Kristeva is here using 'time' to signify separation and 'space' to signify togetherness, the very dualism under discussion in this paper.

6 This is not to say that all uses of the notion of evolution are necessarily exclusionary in these ways. Anzaldúa herself attempts to refigure what is meant by evolution, as mentioned above. See too, Elizabeth Grosz's *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution and the Untimely* (2004). Grosz argues that the notion of temporality that arises in Darwin's work is not deterministic or teleological, but rather suggests an open and unpredictable future. In addition to these recent reworkings of evolution, see Penelope Deutscher's discussions of the complex and contradictory uses of evolutionary theory in certain nineteenth century feminisms (2004, 2006).

7 See, for example, Johannes Fabian's *Time and the Other* (1983) and Anne McClintock's discussion of 'anachronistic space' in *Imperial Leather* (1995: 40–42).

method of managing threatening diversity. In particular, the temporalities of others are rearranged so that they join the line of Western time at some point in its past, thus excluding this diversity from the 'present'. The classic example of such a use of time can be found in colonialist interpretations of indigenous peoples as the 'timeless' relics of a primitive past, which has long since been surpassed by more 'advanced' nations. In this way, differences between groups are understood as developmental, rather than constitutive, and the conflict between them is downplayed.[7] These techniques of temporal distancing thus limit who is considered to be coeval with a particular group, and consequently limit how the community may be constituted.

Importantly, the hegemonic feminist model of progress is not exempt from these techniques, a point that Clare Hemmings has convincingly argued in her article 'Telling Feminist Stories' (2005). Her account shows how the dominant modes of recounting the history of feminism work in discriminatory ways. For instance, she notes that within many accounts of the history of feminism,

> the critiques of women of colour and Third World feminists are referred to in the past tense, while the 'growing interest' in post-structuralism is linguistically still active and present, allowing its proponents to 'deploy', 'reject' and 'embrace.' Post-structuralism thus imaginatively spills over into the next decade, while the critiques of women of colour and Third World women are temporally fixed by their frames of citation. (2005: 123)

Others have argued that the use of techniques of temporal distancing has affected Western feminism's capacity to build transnational networks. As Aili Mari Tripp argues, the attempt to universalise a historical model, which is in fact specific only to certain feminist movements,

> has resulted, for example, in Western scholars often defining the global movement with respect to the first and second waves of feminism in the West as though Western movements were the precursors to similar movements in other parts of the world. (2006: 54)

More generally Shu-mei Shih criticises dominant feminist histories for coding 'temporal movement in terms of progress and development, always implying that what came *after* is superior to or an improvement over what came *before*' (2002: 98). In each case, it is argued that the specificity of different feminist movements and of individual feminist writers is obscured by the attempt to slot them into a pre-fabricated schema of feminism's evolution.

What can be drawn from such critiques is the importance of recognising the way temporal concepts are used to 'manage' difference through exclusion or incorporation through misrecognition. Specifically, certain ways of telling histories (which are themselves supported by particular understandings of change over time) reduce both who can be included within a community, and what types of actions or goals are thought to be appropriate. For example, when it is suggested that non-Western feminisms are adopting the concerns and methods of

an 'earlier' feminist stage, the specificity of these feminisms is misrecognised as 'the same' as what 'we' went through and they are incorporated into the same line of time, though not at the same stage. Even so, by placing certain feminisms within the past of Western feminism, their coevalness is denied and one is no longer *with* the other. In terms of what actions are deemed appropriate, when certain concerns are contained within a past stage then such concerns come to be presented as somehow no longer appropriate for Western feminists. Instead, it seems to be suggested that certain modes of activism need to be left behind as part of the process of the development of the feminist movement.[8]

As a result, if hegemonic feminist histories have, indeed, been written primarily in terms of shifts of senses of appropriate modes of activism, then challenging the way these histories limit both who is included within the feminist community, and what actions are deemed appropriate, requires that the interrelations between different modes of activism be rethought. One way of tackling both of the limits imposed by such histories is to develop an account of time that will enable contradictory histories and contradictory ways of acting to share the same time, to be coeval with each other, rather than be divided from each other as they are within linear accounts of time. Indeed, I would argue this is exactly what Anzaldúa is doing when she insists on the simultaneity of contradictory loyalties and demands. However, I also want to suggest, by looking at another example of her work, that she also insists on the simultaneity of modes of acting.

Anzaldúa's essay 'Bridge, Drawbridge, Sandbar or Island: Lesbians-of-Colour *Hacienda Alianzas*' (1990), is a prime example of the attempt by the US Third world feminists to subvert the hegemonic model discussed by Sandoval. To reiterate, Sandoval has argued that hegemonic feminist histories have been built around the assumption that the three 'phases' of feminism are political positions that inherently contradict one another, and therefore can not share the same time (2000: 51). In contrast, Anzaldúa argues, in this essay, that there needs to be a '*chusando movidas*' or choice of moves within coalition work (1990: 216). She thus attempts to bring together modes of acting, which have been divided across time, as relevant and appropriate choices in the present. None of the options are understood teleologically in terms of a progression from one tactic to a 'more advanced' one. Rather, the utilisation of each one depends on the situation at hand, the level of energy one is willing to commit, and the historical forces one is trying to intervene within.

She elaborates each mode in reference to one of the four metaphors contained in the essay's title. The first move, to bridge, is to mediate across social divides in an attempt to point out the commonalities and explain differences to others. Such work broadly links with the emphasis within so-called first wave feminism of arguing for equality based on the similarities between men and women. There are, however, problems with such an approach in that engaging in bridging work 'may mean a partial loss of self. Being "there" for people *all the time*, *mediating all*

8 Importantly, AnaLouise Keating has suggested that similar techniques have inhibited the reception of key aspects of Anzaldúa's own work, specifically its spiritual aspects (see 2005, 2006, 2008). As she summarises in a recent essay, 'in short, references to spirit, souls, the sacred, and other such spiritually inflected topics are often condemned as essentialist, escapist, naive, or in other ways apolitical and backward thinking' (2008: 55). It appears essential to consider whether the avoidance of discussing the place of spirituality in Anzaldúa's work is an attempt to 'manage' this threatening difference by temporally distancing it from the present.

the time means risking being "walked" on, being "used" ' (*ibid.*). One therefore sometimes retreats, either temporarily as 'drawbridge', or more thoroughly as 'island'. In these moves we can see the emphasis on withdrawing from the work of developing commonalities, either through the celebration of difference, or through a more emphatic withdrawal into separatism. These methods then, can be correlated with the second and third phases of feminist history, as characterised by Sandoval above. However, none of these options are static or mutually exclusive. Instead, Anzaldúa emphasises the ability to 'shift' between tactics, not according to a prearranged order, but with reference to the specificity of the situations one finds oneself within (1990: 224).

As such, temporal concepts linked with notions of progress such as 'modern', 'forward-thinking' or 'backward' are not used as easy guides for which action is most appropriate. Rather, as María Lugones has argued, Anzaldúa's work subverts attempts to set out ready-made options or choices for acting within the world (2005). Indeed, in this essay, Anzaldúa offers a fourth option of acting, illustrated by the sandbar, that brings together bridge, drawbridge and island into a mode of acting that allows each option to be available at once. She describes the sandbar as a more fluid way of moving between tactics, which seeks to respond more closely to the particular contexts of one's actions. She writes that 'being a sandbar means getting a breather from being a perpetual bridge without having to withdraw completely. The high tides and low tides of your life are factors which help to decide whether or where you're a sandbar today, tomorrow' (1990: 224). This metaphor of activism rejects the notion of the self-contained individual who can only do one thing at once. The moment, or instant that would guarantee self containment is contrasted here with an endorsement of shifting movement, a tidal movement backwards and forwards, that is not commensurable with a linear non-repeatable movement into the future. Indeed, in recognising the complexity of social processes, and the possible contradictory effects of each action, Anzaldúa rejects a teleological model, which would promise that particular issues that called upon particular ways of acting would become obsolete. Rather, she highlights the way particular feminist gains may have to be fought for again and again. Thus, instead of the non-repeatable moment, Anzaldúa utilises a temporal framework within which 'you may have to accept that there may be no solutions, resolutions or even agreement ever' (1990: 227). Indeed, she argues that 'the terms, solution, resolution, and progressing and moving forwards are Western dominant cultural concepts' (*ibid.*). Neither does her account utilise a static unchanging all-encompassing space. Instead, space is active, it shifts, has effects, transforms how one needs to understand where one is politically situated. The 'I' who can only do one thing at once is thus contrasted with a non-self identical contradictory movement, shifted by the tides rather than exclusively by its own will.

In discussing Anzaldúa's accounts of activism, Sandoval suggests that her work is better understood as a 'topology' rather than a typology (2000: 54). Rather than ranging methods of acting across time and thus dividing them from each other, Sandoval suggests that Anzaldúa's attempt to hold seemingly contradictory modes together can be understood as an innovative spatialisation. However, in so doing it would appear that Sandoval is drawing upon an understanding of space and time, already discussed above, in which space represents co-existence and time the impossibility of co-existence. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, for example, Kant makes the claim that 'different times are not simultaneous, but successive (just as different spaces are not successive, but simultaneous)' (1998: A31/B47). Under this view, difference can only be thought *together* within space, since two different points are always in the same space, while two different nows are always at different times. I would argue that Sandoval is drawing upon this conceptual schema when she claims that Anzaldúa's work suggests an 'alternative topography of consciousness and action that is not historically or teleologically organised' (2000: 55). However, I would suggest that to interpret Anzaldúa's work in this way may miss a more radical interpretation.

If we remain within a framework where time represents division, then space can only represent togetherness in as much as it is atemporal. That is, insofar as space is static and unchanging. However, as Doreen Massey has argued, an unchanging all-encompassing space can not 'be the sphere of the possibility of real heterogeneity' (2005: 40). In contrast to Sandoval, what I would like to suggest is that rather than shifting from a temporal schema to a spatial one, Anzaldúa is implicitly positing another framework within which both linear time and geometrical space are transformed. That is, to reject an understanding of time as a single linear causal chain organised teleologically does not mean that one is, therefore, necessarily arguing for a certain absence of time. Instead, what could be understood as arising in Anzaldúa's work is an effort to think difference *within* the supposedly singular moment of time, while also conferring movement and openness upon the single point of space, which then acts to *dislocate* sameness and commensurability, rather than provide a stable location for it. Taken together this dislocating space and disjointed time enable multiple histories, loyalties and modes of acting to exist simultaneously.

conclusion

Rather than understanding time and space as the apolitical background within which social life is played out, this article has argued that these most basic concepts guide the way we understand ourselves to be with others. I argued that linear temporal discourses encourage the notion that underlying the qualitative variability of social life is an all-encompassing quantitative element within which each person's moment can be made commensurable with everyone else's. Further,

I argued that insofar as time is understood to be made up a sequence of 'nows', which successively annul each other, and within which contradictory acts can not happen at the same time, then the multiplicity and diversity of social life is obscured. Instead, difference is ranged along the line of time and discursively contained within separate moments.

Through an analysis of Gloria Anzaldúa's work, I have shown how the utilisation of these kinds of temporal discourses can restrict the way political communities operate, both in terms of who can be included and what types of activism are deemed appropriate. Anzaldúa's account of her exclusion from political groups formed around a single aspect of identity suggested a need for envisioning a sense of time and space that would enable a recognition of multiple, contradictory allegiances within the 'same' moment. Further, her account of social activism, in terms of the sandbar, modelled an understanding of activism that did not fall into developmental and teleological frameworks, but which attempted to recognise the value of multiple ways of acting simultaneously. In so doing, I argued that her work can be read as an effort to break open the singularity of the moment that would allow only one way of acting, one way of responding to others, one type of loyalty, or one response to calls for justice, in order to think of a way of being 'at the same time' that enables a recognition of difference within the 'same' moment.

Overall, then, I have sought to show that in challenging concepts of homogeneous community and categorical identity, Anzaldúa's work also challenges dominant concepts of time and space. In this way I have sought to offer another avenue for interpreting her work. However, this has not been to suggest that the interconnection between concepts of time, space and community is a contingent element of Anzaldúa's work alone, but rather to point towards the way time and space shape how we understand ourselves to be with others more generally. Consequently, reconsidering what kinds of possibilities are available for connecting and interacting with others in less exclusionary ways rests, partly, on how one understands the possibilities of sharing time and space with others.

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