

Borderlands Rhetorics and Third-Space Sites

I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet.

—Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

This book is about borderlands rhetorics, third spaces, and zines. Not all zines, of course, because while they share several characteristics, they also vary widely in their formats, politics, themes, languages, and distribution channels. All zines, from skinhead and suburban titles to those catering to anarchists, lesbians, and riot grrrls, respond in one way or another to dominant ideologies as experienced and understood by the zine authors, or “zinesters.” Zines can be single-authored and are sometimes anonymously authored, and they are most often explicitly committed to a free and diverse press. I focus on feminist of-color zines that are co-authored and co-produced.¹ Such zines allow me to investigate collaborative endeavors and coalitional practices that both inform and are informed by what I term “third-space theory” and “borderlands rhetorics,” both of which I define and elaborate on below.² As this work demonstrates, third-space hermeneutics have widespread potential and application, and can be identified across a broad spectrum of practices.

Despite the immediacy of zine content and the cutting-edge nominal cast of the form itself—not the old-fashioned “magazine” or the nerd chic

“fanzine” but the sharply concatenated “zine”—the genre is by no means new. Some researchers argue that revolutionary pamphlets in the United States are zines’ precursors while others find links to relatively more recent discourses, such as fan newsletters (including science fiction fanzines) of the 1930s, punk manifesto/scrapbooks of 1970s, and Riot Grrrl Zines of the 1990s.³ Still others trace the emergence of zines to alternative, of-color, and feminist presses as well as to liberation movements.⁴ The zines I introduce in the following chapters are those that advocate for change based on identified affinities and intersections of oppression, injustice, and inequity. These identifications, forged across borders of difference, lend insight into practices of social action and social change as evidenced by their integration of coalitional politics in everyday contexts. Although electronic zines are prolifically produced and readily available to some, my inquiry is limited to print zines because not all who create and/or read zines have access to computer technology.⁵

While they can be sleek productions, zines are often put together in a raw cut-and-paste style, copied, and traded or sold for a nominal fee.⁶ The trades that occur between zinesters often interrupt purchasing imperatives. The trading of zines among zinesters serves to build community, circulate information, and create dialogues between zines and zinesters.⁷ They can be irreverent, parodic, utopian, and imaginative; thus, in a sense, zines perform the differences they are trying to make. By challenging, reimagining, and replacing exclusionary and oppressive discursive practices, zines perform new expressions of subjectivity. Such radical rhetorical performances constitute a third space that offers insight into the multiply voiced discourses or borderlands rhetorics that characterize third-space subjectivities, sites, and practices.⁸ The zines and zinesters I consider here participate, as Gloria Anzaldúa imagined, in the practice and production of a value system that focuses on egalitarian social relationships, equity, and social justice.

Understanding the countercultural production of zines is important especially insofar as it reveals the pursuit of social change, the building of community, and the participation in community action. The zines explored in this book explicitly propagate grassroots literacies meant to effect change through the circulation of information and the production of new practices, perspectives, and knowledges. They are sites where traditional knowledges circulate and sometimes collide with newer knowledges to produce innovative and informed practices. They are action-oriented, feminist and sometimes queer-identified; they are conscious of race, racialization, sex, sexualization, gender, and class. In them readers witness acted-upon knowledge informed by critical and coalitional consciousness.⁹

I distinguish critical consciousness from criticism as I argue that criticism, while often performing an important function, does not necessarily lead to action.¹⁰ Whereas criticism in zines uses the page as a medium between like-minded people, zines informed by critical consciousness use the page as a medium between like-minded people as well as an active and conscious connection to the real, material world. They seek to redress material inequities and promote a broad-based agenda of social justice through critically informed social action. Critical consciousness as revealed in what I term third-space zines is committed to engaged understanding, action, and expressed radical and participatory democracies.¹¹

A focus on third-space zines illuminates the sites, subjectivities, and (discursive) practices of resistance undertaken to generate alternative knowledges, practices, and relations that first imagine and then reconstruct and promote models of social justice and antiracist agendas. Vibrant and vital counterhegemonic sites, these third-space zines reveal a desire to connect, communicate, inform, and act. They also reveal overlooked concerns and un(der)represented voices. In their rants and raves against injustices and social inequalities, zinesters speak of and offer narratives about issues related to child care, mental health, body image, poverty, rape, safety, spirituality, political economy, color, sex, sexualities, gender, and the confines and artificiality of a dominant dichotomous social order. They can be savvy, angry, and complicated. However, their expressions can also be naive and even jaded, and their rants sometimes remain at the level of criticism that is not articulated to social action. The zines I analyze re(en)vision and represent multiply situated, nondominant subjectivities in pursuit of coalition building to address local inequities.¹² I have chosen to use the term *coalition* throughout my work as it implies, for me, a practiced articulation or deliberate bringing and coming together around social change that can be witnessed in zines. Through an engagement with deployed borderlands rhetorical practices and performances, myriad micropractices of resistance to enact social transformations are revealed. As Michelle Comstock states, zines have “much to teach us about the sites, practices, politics, and economies of writing” (383). As I illustrate, zines also have much to teach us about re-presentations of self and community as contradictory, complicated, ambiguous, and on the move. They have much to reveal about the practices and performances of lived theory.¹³ Before turning to what can be accomplished through an engaged and sustained inquiry into zines, I want to define the terms I deploy throughout the book. In defining these terms I hope also to make clear why I believe the zines I study, what I understand as third-space zines, are particularly well suited sites for the

investigation of rhetorical and countercultural production that is connected to social action.

A focus on third-space zines and their work to address social injustices and pursue coalitional politics that are transformative in their agendas offers insight into how change is pursued and how it happens.¹⁴ The borderlands rhetorics deployed in these zines can illustrate the creative and generative capacity of third-space, borderlands rhetorical practices, and cultural reproduction. These rhetorics, as deployed in feminist and queer of-color zines and the zines themselves can offer third-space subjects a potentially powerful site for social action.

Recognizing Borderlands Rhetorics in Zines as Third-Space Sites

While first reading zines, I experienced a familiarity that initially made little sense to me. However, as I continued reading, I experienced a deep connection to the rhetorical practices and performances I was encountering. I found myself in the midst of rhetorical innovations, creative and critical inquiries and reflections, and powerfully persuasive words, visual images, and spatio-cultural configurations of everyday people in everyday contexts.¹⁵ I began identifying with the innovations—discursive, visual, and otherwise—performed in these zines. With an excitement accompanied by reluctance, I named these rhetorical practices “borderlands rhetorics.” Though my understanding of the term *borderlands* is a reflection of my own history of having been born and raised in the U.S./Mexico borderlands, I mean for it here to imply a still-spatialized though not necessarily geographic context where two or more things come together and, in so doing, create a third space of sorts. I also mean these third spaces to be understood as the in-between spaces that are created at virtual and material intersections.

Anne Donadey notes the important cautions and critiques Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano makes of works that risk merely appropriating Anzaldúa concepts, conflating differences, and erasing specificity. Donadey argues, however, for extending Anzaldúa’s ideas beyond the material borderlands of her context. Specifically, Donadey states that while she agrees

with Yarbro-Bejarano that what Emma Pérez (1999) would call Anzaldúa’s “decolonial imaginary” should not be flattened out by a postmodern translation of the concept of borderlands that would erase its historical and cultural grounding by turning it

into a disembodied metaphor that all can come to claim, it is also important to remember that Anzaldua's *Borderlands/La Frontera* has at least two levels of address: one deals with the specificity of the Chicana/o history in the U.S./Mexican borderlands; the other seeks to make a space for Chicanas/os and others whose identities cannot be reduced to binaries in a variety of locations, including the academy. Anzaldua's first words in *Borderlands/La Frontera* emphasize this very multiplicity of addresses: "The actual physical borderland that I'm dealing with in this book is the Texas-U.S. Southwest/Mexican border. The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest" (19). Thinking of academic fields of study through the model of borders and borderlands is, I believe, a way to follow up on an important insight of Anzaldua's, rather than a misappropriation of her work. (23–24)

Coming to identify and name a borderlands rhetoric is not without struggle and conflict for me. By including discursive and metaphoric borderlands in my investigations, I fear that I will distract from the tangible and material realities, inequities, and injustices, or the regulatory power of the political technologies, that prevail in the Mexico/U.S. borderlands from which I come. However, I resist the tendency for fear to inhibit or immobilize exploration and action. And so I proceed with this tension that is informed by both the concept and location of borderlands as well as by emergent borderlands rhetorics, which for me represent third-space lived experience and both/and consciousness.

I was born and raised on the Juárez/El Paso border, a place where the border is a lived arbitrary line that constructs and is constructed. It is both meaningful and meaningless, material and metaphoric, visible and invisible. It divides and it unites. It is powerful and powerless, peaceful and violent. It scars the (psychic) landscape for those of us who lived divided as a result of its imposition. Borders have historically been spaces of colonization where powerful forces have imposed, represented, and misinterpreted historical truths. Borders, in my experience, have all too often been understood and utilized only to delimit, divide, and order things. The focus of such an understanding is on the production of borders rather than on their potential productivity.¹⁶ Like borders, binaries have served as demarcations that have divided and defined in the context of identity formation. Rhetorics of identity have traditionally relied on modernist tendencies that have promoted a notion of self that is unitary, unified, whole, fixed, and stable.

Identity configured accordingly disallows the visibility of lived experience (as both produced and productive) and those third spaces that exceed and are excluded from identity binaries. Revealing and representing subjectivities as fluid, unstable, and even messy requires a deconstructive process that consciously challenges and ultimately dismantles the identity binary.¹⁷ Borderlands rhetorics express this dismantling and reveal third-space ways of being and knowing beyond binaries.¹⁸

In my work, I play with language. I always have. It is serious play through which I am able to reimagine language's potential. Borderlands rhetorics can be playful rhetorics that allow for the exploration of un/authorized terrain. By un/authorized and contested terrain I mean the spaces between and beyond (identity) binaries and those created at intersections and overlaps. Since my childhood, those spaces identified as "off limits" remain of intrigue to me. Chela Sandoval notes that "[t]his process of taking and using whatever is necessary and available in order to negotiate, confront, or speak to power—and then moving on to new forms, expressions, and ethos when necessary—is a method for survival" (29).¹⁹ By investigating the multiple ways in which words and images are used in third-space zines, which I understand to be innovative sites of theoretical production, I intend to broaden our (academic) understanding of social discourse, particularly borderlands rhetoric and its implications for practices of (self-) representation and alliance formation that have meaning beyond dominant culture. Mis/representations are sources of objectification that, when re/vised, can allow subjects to engage in new ways of interpreting and re-presenting lived experiences and new knowledges. Brummett and Bowers argue that representations are the "raw materials for [re]constructing subject positions" (121). I agree, though I also always understand them to be only partial and contingent. Borderlands rhetorics—discursive and visual—are those rhetorics that have the potential to reconstruct stories, identities, places, histories, and experiences in such a way as to not only expose misrepresentations but also to uncover or produce new perspectives and even new knowledges. While zines are often text-heavy sites of the personal testimony of lived experiences, the visuals they deploy often serve as a complement to the written text and the written text serves as a complement to the visual. Reading the text and the images (what some refer to as the *imagetext*) through a countercultural lens and relational understanding of both, I will move beyond an emphasis on discursive function to also focus on the visual, which is always implicated in the rhetorical force of zines.²⁰ The images produced in zines are rhetorical productions that are often nonnormative demonstrations of how it is possible to see, do, and be in new ways or otherwise intended to be read in countercultural, nondominant ways. I will,

accordingly, further the argument for a politics of location and relation from which productive looking as well as critical and creative re-presentations and reconfigurations can disrupt normative imperatives and assumptions.

My extended focus will include discussions of transtextuality as a means to understand what words and images in zines can accomplish together in terms of persuasion, production, and the potential for social action.²¹ Through rhetorical analysis of the discursive and the visual in the zines I study here, I argue that the boundaries between text and image are convergences, not sharp divides, and that these convergences reveal a generative and important relationship of mutuality as well as a demonstration of third-space theory and borderlands rhetorics.²²

As I have argued elsewhere, borderlands rhetorics are subversive third-space tactics and strategies that can prove discursively disobedient to the confines of phallogocentrism and its neocolonizing effects over time and space.²³ Like many third-space subjects, I have needed to read and interpret con/texts, and reread and reinterpret con/texts, in multiple directions. Growing up on the El Paso/Juárez border, this tactic of reading between the lines was part of how I read and understood the world. It was representative for me of my location and the ways in which I moved in the world—always between the lines. I learned this tactic before I can remember and perfected it in simultaneity with my formal education. I remember vividly how these practices emerged for me in elementary school as I read Dick and Jane and Spot books. At home we, too, had a dog named Spot, but we called him Lunares. Lunar, in Spanish, means mole, which translates roughly into “spot” in English. I read and reread, and interpreted and reinterpreted my first grade reader from both a dominant *and* a nondominant perspective such that I could imagine myself in the text. Through a silent, unauthorized, and subversive act, I inserted myself—*y mi familia*—into the text by first reimagining myself and my history as a central part of the text and then by reinterpreting the story to fit my lived experience. Only then could I make meaning and sense of what I was supposed to be learning. More importantly, this subversive reading allowed me to function within and yet beyond a dominant knowledge system. I was six years old. Such a reading practice, which I developed and deployed over time, demonstrates a differential consciousness—what Chela Sandoval calls a “survival skill” (60).²⁴ I identify similar survival skills at work through of-color zines in which zinesters read and reread, write and rewrite between the lines to blur boundaries and reveal third-space contexts.

Differential consciousness, according to Chela Sandoval, as a tool of meaning making, can inform the deconstruction and the reconstruction of knowledge and the politics and practices of disarticulation and rearticulation.²⁵

Additionally, differential consciousness enables us to value and recognize shared survival skills that have the potential to contribute to a coalitional consciousness, which can potentially inform egalitarian social relations and social justice. Revealed third-space locations illuminate the spaces from which third-space subjects self-identify as well as the spaces we occupy and/or are relegated to, individually and collectively.

This work is, at least in part, an answer to the invitation made by Sandoval to acknowledge our complicated places and consciously drift into the abyss beyond dualisms in order to speak a third voice, revision third meaning (142–45). This abyss is a third space where subjectivities can be reimagined and re-membered and from which they can be (re)presented. Valuing lived knowledges, a practice that is common in zines, addresses Sandoval's critique that these technologies are all too often not acknowledged as "theoretical and methodological approach[es] in [their] own right" (171). This project unearths, identifies, and applies the methodologies of the oppressed as I understand and have lived them.²⁶

My efforts, generally, are a critique of dichotomy.²⁷ In understanding that the border, while materially significant and imposing, is also arbitrary, it can also be understood that the border shifts. It is recreated and reproduced through power, practices, relations, and representations in multiple spaces over time.²⁸ Borders are recreated, resisted, and reshaped through interactions. Mine is also, then, a project of respatialization because the border is, *and is not*, restricted to a geographic space as a fixed location. Borders delimit territory in a manner that has implications for the production of knowledges. This understanding allows the lived theories of the borderlands to move beyond obvious geographic locations to other locations, unsettling assumptions about space as static, homogenous, and uncontested. The rhetorical practices emerging from these spaces to represent differences, contestation, and coalition illuminate how change is proposed and pursued from nondominant, third-space, contexts. It is important to note that difference, as conceived throughout many of the zines I discuss here, is understood as a complicated term, especially as it can imply "difference from" normativities and the normative configurations that structure daily life. Zinesters are often intervening in these pervasive normative configurations that structure social life. However, zinesters also acknowledge that language produces and is produced by these structuring norms. Language, sometimes through neologisms, which can be part of what I am referring to as borderlands rhetoric, is deployed as a strategic—critical and creative—intervention. So the term *difference* deployed in zines is not necessarily a part of the dualism that functions in strict opposition to

sameness but, rather, can be a relational and experiential term of third-space articulations in pursuit of new configurations.

I approach these emergent rhetorics or borderlands rhetorics from a spatialized perspective because I have come to understand a reciprocity between spaces or stories and the people who populate them. I am arguing for a relationship between people and places—the places we populate and the places within which we circulate—in order to suggest that we not only define these spaces but are also, in part, defined by them. Such a spatialized approach signals an understanding of particular spaces as contingent and contestable terrains that are in/formed by ambiguity and contradiction. Again, this understanding has implications for the production of knowledge that will be explored throughout this book. Because third-space zines pursue coalitions across borders of difference to address social inequity, they provide an ideal context for studying the practices, performances, and productions that are represented by borderlands rhetorics. The zinesters whose zines I consider speak of their contexts in spatialized terms.²⁹ They understand their work to be taking place in a context of community where contestations, ambiguities, and contradictions abound.³⁰ Zinesters explicitly engage their lived contradictions and ambiguities in terms of racialized identities, gender identification, and sexuality. In this work, I identify and explore these messy spaces of lived experience as borderlands contexts.

I both explore and reproduce borderlands rhetorics that represent the discursive, visual, symbolic, material, and disciplinary borders and boundaries that constrain and produce us and our discourses in the everyday. Drawing from the work of Maria Lugones, I borrow the term *peregrinations* to capture the movement beyond dichotomies that zinesters perform as conscious third-space practices. I propose that it is through the in-depth exploration of third-space and borderlands rhetorics that meaningful discoveries can be made to reveal important insights into the transformative potentials of third space. For Chela Sandoval,

the social space represented by these “third-term” identities is that place out of which a politicized differential consciousness arises. It is this personal, political, and cultural configuration that [has] permitted feminists of color from very different racial, ethnic, physical, national, or sexual identities access to the same psychic domain, where they recognized one another as “countrywomen” of a new kind of global and public domain, and as a result generated a new kind of coalition identity politics, a “coalitional consciousness.” (71)

Borderlands rhetorical practices in third-space contexts reveal a shared understanding of nondominant experiences that can build coalition.

Zines are an ideal third-space site within which to study the production of borderlands rhetoric. The zines of my study articulate traditional and contemporary knowledges to inform new ways of being and relating across the borders of different knowledge systems. They are innovative and transformational in intent and action. Zines are written and reproduced from perspectives that represent a full range of the political spectrum. This work considers contemporary zines whose authors self-identify as some or all of the following: antiracist, of-color, feminist/a or womanist; these zinesters, in turn produce zines that: build and mobilize community, work to forge coalitions across lines of difference for purposes of pursuing agendas of social justice and equity, and provide third-space contexts ideal for exploring rhetorical innovations and third-space practices.

In its powerful challenges to the limits and obfuscation of dualistic representational rhetoric, much of the discourse in the zines I have studied is recognizable as borderlands rhetorics. I was and remain hope-filled by the new knowledges and the new cultures that are part of a social reconfiguration emerging in these zines. These emergent cultural reformations are sites and discourses of third-space activist subjects and borderlands rhetorics. Many of the zines I studied reflect not just the injustices of third-space subjectivity but the joys of *nepantla* that can be uncovered and encountered as well. As Anzaldúa notes in the preface to the first edition of *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, “Living on borders and in margins, keeping intact one’s shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an ‘alien’ element. There is an exhilaration in being a participant in the further evolution of humankind” (*La Frontera* n.p.). Like Anzaldúa, I, too, believe that in “every border resident, colored or non-colored . . . dormant areas of consciousness are being activated, awakened” (*La Frontera* n.p.). My work suggests that this activation can be found in (micro) practices of rearticulation and resistance in borderlands rhetorics. The politics of articulation are reconfiguring third-space sites, subjectivities, and rhetorical practices in pursuit of an activist, transformative agenda. Third-space zines use subversive tactics and strategies of interruption and resistance to challenge and potentially transform dominant practices of subordination, division, and exclusion. I am arguing that these zines can offer important insights into the representation of lived truths, the production of knowledge, the importance of imagination and the imagined, and the process of deconstructing subordinating divisions as present and circulating in third-space contexts. Ultimately, my goal is to demonstrate

that borderlands rhetorics and third spaces are other ways of being and knowing that offer hopeful potentials for what has been referred to as a radical, transcultural, and coalitional democracies.

Borderlands Peregrinations: Traveling beyond Borders and Binaries into Third Space

I am of and from the border. I embody the border. It is how I know and experience the world. I am aware, painfully at times, of the consequences and risks of my names and how I self-identify. In the introduction to the second edition of Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Sonia Saldívar-Hall notes that when the new mestiza "names all her names, once again she enacts the culmination of unearthing her multiple [and I would add, at times contradictory] subjectivities" (7). On each side of the border of my beginnings I can be in/authenticated—not quite American and not quite Mexican either. Fronteriza? Chicana? Latina? American/a? Mestiza? Lived borderlands experiences challenge notions of purity and even authenticity that fit neatly within a binary framework of either/or but not so neatly within a third-space framework of both/and.

It is the lived condition of crossing borders and existing in the realm of both/and together that allows for the conscious movement into the creative terrain of third space. Third space is an interstitial space of intersection and overlap, ambiguity and contradiction, that materializes a subversion to either/or ways of being and reproducing knowledge. It is an epistemological as well as an ontological space revealing ways of knowing and being in the world. Third-space ways of knowing and being defy the values that are implicated in the "authentic," the "proper," and the "pure." In short, third space is a space that materializes what borders serve to divide, subordinate, and obscure. In rhetorical terms, it is the space within which borderlands rhetorics circulate and materialize third-space consciousness. I draw on the work of Chicana feminists as well as scholars such as David Harvey and Doreen Massey, in order to develop an understanding of space, especially third space, as always dynamic, historically defined, and contested in order to reveal radical impurities and what Lugones would call spatial complexities.³¹ Such radical impurities belong to and emerge from third space as a counter/cultural space for counter/public rhetorical productions.

For Massey, space is a relational production, which is to say a product of social relations and thus necessarily political. Space emerges through active material practices.³² It is never complete, never finished. Rather, it is "the

sphere of dynamic simultaneity, constantly disconnected by new arrivals” and determined by new relations (Massey 107). To capture such a dynamic and contested nature of space, I engage and focus on the narrative-based part of Massey’s definition of space as “stories-so-far”(12, 24).³³ This spatialized conceptualization allows me to identify third spaces within what I am calling borderlands rhetorics. Third spaces are both indeterminate and constructive. They are constructed by and they construct geographies, histories, embodied subjectivities, and borderlands rhetorics. Third-space subjects and third-space sites are recursively related, revealing an intimate connection between place and self.³⁴ As Patton and Sánchez-Eppler point out, an “identity is not merely a succession of strategic moves but a highly mobile cluster of claims to self that appear and transmogrify in and of place. But place is also a mobile imaginary, a form of desire” (4). They continue, “Place is acted upon by identifiers—by identifications—that occur, as events, on/in ‘it’ ” (4). Finally, they ask, “What must be interrogated, and harnessed?: the intersection, the collision, the slippage between body-places; the partial transformation of those places; the face installed by dissimulation in place” (4). Revealing the recursivity between site and subjectivity, third-space zinesters as multiply-situated subjects embody multiple sites, social locations, and various and fluid identity markers.

Borders have been spatially imposed and reinscribed on and in our bodies in ways that have proven oppressive and subordinating.³⁵ In resisting the arbitrary nature of borders, third-space subjects and borderlands rhetorics can blur divisions and expose potentially fertile spaces/places for reinvention of “new subject formations, new cultural formations, [and] new political formations” (Pérez-Torres 12). My efforts bring together Chela Sandoval’s differential consciousness and Emma Pérez’s decolonial imaginary as necessarily present in, and important to, third-space contexts and borderlands rhetorics.³⁶ Believing that we not only shape discourses but are also shaped by discourses, I am interested in the rhetorical dynamics at play in practices and performances of self- and Other-representation. Gloria Anzaldúa states that the work of mestiza consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality. She challenges us to show—in the flesh and through the images in our work—how duality is transcended (1987 102).³⁷ I utilize the concept of third space as a space materialized by this transcendence.

Third-space contexts are spatialized contexts within which new stories created by zinesters emerge to contribute to stories-so-far and to propose new social and cultural configurations brought together for social change. In third space, borderlands rhetorics and their representational potentials emerge to reclaim and resignify language practices beyond dichotomous

borders. Borderlands spaces can be considered material narratives; that is to say spaces have histories, contested histories, and they are continuously productive of new stories, stories in the making, that are contested and contingent.³⁸ Borderlands rhetorics are rhetorics that re-present nondominant stories, subjectivities, and practices, and that materialize third-space consciousness. I start then with Gloria Anzaldúa's definition of a borderland as a "vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary . . . in a constant state of transition" (1987 25) and then move into what I identify as third space. I make this move as my own act of coalition—to pursue and make meaning with others whose geographic location is not the border. Third space can be understood as a location and/or practice. As a location, third space is a relational space of contestation—often in the form of discursive struggle—and can also be one of shared understanding and meaning making. As a practice it can reveal a differential consciousness capturing the movement that joins different networks of consciousness and revealing a potential for greater understanding.³⁹ By third space I mean, then, the space created by borderlands contexts. It is real and imagined, material and metaphoric.⁴⁰

Acknowledging that language, discourse, and rhetoric have been used to mis(re)present histories that have erased lived experiences not coinciding with dominant (mis)interpretations of life on and of the borderlands is a starting point for reconsidering the transformative potential of borderlands rhetorics. While I understand that the struggles revealed in my investigation are primarily discursive, they are not limited by or to the discursive. The power of the concept of borderlands as I unearth and deploy it is that it transcends the discursive to include third-space experience in its psychic, material, embodied, social, sexual, and always political dimensions. I contend that zines as il/legitimate and im/pure third-space sites challenge sanctioned—authorized and expert—discourses in ways that redress the obfuscation of alternative, nondominant expressions and representations of self and Others. Zines, then, are sites of resistance that are often overlooked and underrepresented in dominant contexts. The borderlands rhetorics they produce flourish in the fertile third space of the interstitial and the liminal.

The demarcating line of the border—not always a straight line—can obscure third space or fertile ground of unrealized potentials. Third space becomes a space of rhetorical struggle and of shared understanding or *conocimiento*.⁴¹ Third space is a site where things are articulated and disarticulated, and a practice that offers an opportunity to reflect on and revision the ways in which discourses have been used to erase, obscure, or exclude. In employing a borderlands rhetoric, a rhetoric of third space, I do

not lose sight of the tangible and material realities, inequities and injustices or the regulatory power of the political technologies, that prevail in the Mexico/U.S. borderlands from which I come.⁴² I am arguing, however, for the epistemological significance of third space and the promise and potential for a borderlands rhetoric to communicate a vibrant, important, and, at times, even hopeful way of knowing and being in the world across borders of difference.⁴³ Third-space consciousness is inherent in the deliberate deployment of a borderlands rhetoric. Third space offers a possibility for many concurrent, interacting, ambiguous, and even contradictory discourses.⁴⁴

Third-space subjects are dis/similar. Our collective identities are always only tactically essential. They are never permanent or whole. Yet borderlands contexts and subjectivities can be articulated to one another temporally and spatially in order to acknowledge a sense of community and serve a sociopolitical agenda that informs notions of social justice and the development of voice(s) that can (re)tell our stories and thereby inform our futures. Pérez writes that “perhaps our only hope is to move in many directions and knowingly ‘occupy’ an interstitial space where we practice third-space feminism” (20). I would add that we may also practice borderlands rhetorics in this third space. When we knowingly occupy this space, we engage in the practice of differential consciousness, which gives rise to the opportunity for a developed coalitional consciousness that can, in turn, move us to a sociopolitical agenda based on notions of social justice. As we move toward and realize coalitional consciousness, we can begin to re(en)vision how history has been written about and without us and how history can then begin to be revised in the space(s) of the decolonial imaginary.

Through a third-space consciousness, then, dualities are transcended to reveal potentially fertile and generative borderlands where third-space subjects put our perspectives, lived experiences, and rhetorical performances into play. In third-space sites, representational rhetorics emerge as borderlands rhetorics. Unlike dualistic language paradigms and structures, borderlands rhetorics are not constrained by binary borders; instead, they inhabit a named third space of ambiguity and contradiction. The third-space consciousness inherent in borderlands rhetorics can be found, as I illustrate next, in third-space zines. Borderlands rhetorics expose third-space relational practices and complexities.⁴⁵ They are third-space consciousnesses materialized and made manifest.

A study of third-space zines advances understanding of third-space theory as well as third-space discursive and rhetorical practices. Importantly, third-space theory can contribute to understanding multiply situated

subjects, coalitional consciousness, and community activism. The lived experiences of third-space subjects provide insight into contemporary feminist conversations about relational subjectivities, questions of agency and authority, and the im/possibilities of the rhetorics of representation. These conversations can be invigorated and informed by looking through the lens of third space. Zines provide the revisioning and strategic potential that bridge the gap between theory and practice. They also speak to the important dimensions of third-space sites and subjectivities that are steeped in the normed concepts of the im/pure, in/valid, im/proper, and il/legitimate. In discussing discursive spaces and identity practices emerging in community con/texts, Juana Maria Rodríguez notes that “it is precisely their unsanctioned status as objects of inquiry that opens up interpretive possibilities for . . . representation[s] . . . as they announce the contradictory contours of the discursive spaces in which they emerge” (8). I agree and would add that it is in the space of the unsanctioned and improper that third-space practices and the decolonized imaginary can flourish to reconsider and re-present lived experiences, dreams, and desires for how the world ought to be.

In their discussion about diasporic subjects and their tactical, dissident performances, Patton and Sánchez-Eppler turn to de Certeau’s notion that “tactics erode the terms of the ‘proper’ space,” concluding that we “need better tools to appreciate the nuanced materiality and corrosive power of this kind of dissident performance” (5). Third space as theory and practice provides these very tools. As Anzaldúa demonstrates, borderlands subjects are in/authenticated in multiple directions as a result of our contradictory positionings and mobility. Specifically, in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, she states, “The new mestiza . . . learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else” (101). These often messy pluralities birth, and are birthed by, the dissident performers and performances of third-space con/texts. The ability to sustain the ambivalence and turn it into something productive is related to Anzaldúa’s notion of mestiza consciousness, which I connect to Chela Sandoval’s ideas regarding differential consciousness, to Emma Pérez’s decolonial imaginary, and on to coalitional consciousness.

I have been interested in the limits and im/possibilities of discourse and its representational potentials beyond the binary ever since I can remember. My intrigue with language and its in/ability to capture and represent

borderlands experiences began when I was a child. Words, meanings, and truths commingled and contradicted one another in the borderlands of my youth. Proper language and proper perspectives had little to do with my everyday except when they were deployed by my great-aunt, *mi tía*, who worked hard to teach us all that was proper. The proper had been codified for my great-aunt in the Velázquez Spanish-English/English-Spanish bilingual dictionary and in the works of Emily Post—both texts she referred to with regularity and seemingly appropriate rigidity. My intentions here are informed by the disconnect I experienced in my childhood between what I was taught, what I experienced, and how people, practices, and places were misrepresented to me along the way as well as how that disconnect became part of my living consciousness and way of making meaning in the world. Such consciousness refuses fixed dichotomous structures and their reductive implications for matters of self-representation. It informs borderlands rhetorics and can inform third-space practices.

Borderlands rhetorics and third space each can be understood as practices and locations. As practices they reveal a differential consciousness, and as locations they reveal spaces of opportunity for the building of coalitions. Borderlands rhetorics are rhetorics of resistance, coalition, community education, activism, imagination, and representation that are produced and reproduced in third-space contexts. Third space then is the very epistemology of borderlands rhetoric.⁴⁶

Third-Space Imaginary, Coalitional Consciousness, and Zines

As a demonstration and an application of the theory and method of third-space consciousness, I begin with my own imagination, which remains in the process of decolonization.⁴⁷ It is a decolonized imagination that allows me to dismantle limiting binaries and rhetorical structures that have produced norms and sustained the dominance of dichotomous and subordinating representations of knowledge and subjectivity. The tools and technologies utilized in these efforts are primarily those of the methodology of the oppressed, as defined and described by Chela Sandoval in her book by the same title.⁴⁸ Third-space zines materialize the Sandovalian abyss. The decolonized imaginary in zines creates a playful affective subjectivity that deploys a borderlands rhetoric to flout the stability and the duality of dominant subject positionings from this abyss.

The imaginary as an in/valid and in/formative third-space tool is often deployed to re(en)vision subjects as agents in our re-presentation of ourselves,

the knowledge/s we co-construct, and the complicated understanding we have of the world in which we live. In an effort to demonstrate how a singular voice, or even a linear chronology, cannot represent third-space subjects who move across contexts and in so doing become—and unbecome—Other, Patton and Sánchez-Eppler investigate “practices of self-invention and self-authentication [and how they] simultaneously give life and produce death” (7). Their investigation is born of the necessity to narrate life not chronologically but instead according to different emplacements, referred to as diasporas, that allow for narrations not of the whole but of movements and partialities.

Patton and Sánchez-Eppler refer to the stabilizing effects of strategies undertaken in proper space and time. Their work suggests that it is the mobility inherent in third-space subjectivity that interrupts certainty. They note that as “we have each, no doubt, discovered for ourselves, whatever we may be (or have been), even when we hardly move at all, there are places and times in which we simply are not, or are not quite, primarily that” (8). My understanding of Patton and Sánchez-Eppler’s point is that subjectivity is fluid and that distinct and shifting positionalities and displacements have implications for how we (are able or not to) interpret, represent, and revision ourselves and our lived experiences across time and space.⁴⁹

Borderlands rhetorics as third-space discourses are those that can liberate us from the confines and constrictions of dominant dichotomous thinking, knowing, and being. Sandoval looks upon such potentially liberating practices as challenges to dominant representational strategies that are born of differential consciousness uncovering a void and, in so doing, acting as a “conduit . . . capable of evoking and puncturing through to another site” (140). These “other sites,” which can be considered third-space sites, represent a differential zone where the “differential activist is thus made by the ideological intervention that she is also making: the only predictable final outcome is transformation itself” (Sandoval 157). I understand this to mean that the potential for transformation may not always be realized.⁵⁰ This unpredictability is certainly present in third-space zines. While I recognize the im/possibilities for transformation, I remain interested in the proposed, pursued, and enacted micropractices of subversion, resistance, community education, and revisionings that I highlight in third-space zines in the following chapters.⁵¹

In an academic example of third-space revisioning, Emma Pérez’s *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* explores the transformative potential of representing the histories of those of us previously obscured from historical sight and significance. Citing Homi Bhabha, Pérez

reconsiders that which has been “unspoken and unseen” as representative of interstitial spaces in a historic borderlands context (5). For Pérez, the interstitial is an in-between space that reflects the tensions and reproduced silences of multiple conjunctures within the context of the borderlands. It is a space that “eludes invasion, a world unseen that cannot, will not, be colonized” (115). Following Pérez, the interstitial can be understood as the space of the decolonial imaginary—a third space of newness, rearticulated desire, revisioned histories, and empowerment; in short, it is a space of the emancipation of third-space consciousness from which histories and even futures, can be reimagined.

Pérez uses the decolonial imaginary specifically to revision historic mis(re)presentations of Chicanas over time and space. The decolonial imaginary, broadly deployed, allows us to reclaim certain spaces in time to retell our stories and thereby resist and transform historical omissions and occlusions. Specifically, for Chicanas to revision ourselves as active participants in history, more than Madonnas and more than whores, we must bring our imaginations to bear on our diverse historical roles. Pérez’s emphasis on the decolonial moves us to reimagine our history from a noncolonial perspective.⁵² Imaginative historical reversals and revisionings allow us to see ourselves as active agents in history.⁵³

As a tool, the imagination allows us to deconstruct and move beyond the reductive and restrictive tendencies of oppositional dualisms. It allows those who deploy it to uncover how either/or ways of knowing are simply too limiting. Powerful norms that produce notions such as purity and impurity, for example, can be exposed for the myths that they are through the imagination. As a process, the imagination is involved in subject re-creation and re-presentation. According to Anzaldúa, “Imagination, a function of the soul, has the capacity to extend us beyond the confines of our skin, situation, and condition so we can choose our responses. It enables us to reimagine our lives, rewrite the self, and create guiding myths for our time” (2002 5). Third-space zines are sites of historical reimaginings, revisionings, and reclamations. Third-space zinesters often question historic productions, especially to inquire who was left out of historical accounts and why. Their inquiries sometimes work to unsettle representations of historical figures as acceptable in and for dominant contexts. Zines such as *Bi-Girl World* and *Memoirs of a Queer Hapa* work to unsettle heteronormative assumptions, imperatives, and mis/representations in contemporary and historic contexts. Meanwhile, zines such as *Bamboo Girl* and *Borderlands: Tales from Disputed Territories between Races and Cultures* consciously disrupt normative racialized assumptions steeped in dominance and white

supremacy. Third-space zinesters demonstrate an ability, which many claim is their response/ability, to question taken-for-granted assumptions. Such a practice reveals the imagination in zines and also the utilization of feminist, queer, and coalitional consciousness to unearth exclusions and participate in practices of broad-based historical inclusivity.

As Mohanty notes, a conceptualization of “race and racism is . . . essential to any contemporary discussion of feminist politics” (65). The feminist of-color zines that I study demonstrate an awareness of the ways in which gender, sexuality, and race (as well as other identity markers and locations) serve as structuring principles in social contexts. In accordance with the work of Omi and Winant regarding racial formations, my analysis of antiracist and of-color zines reveals that race continues to be a central organizing principle and way of understanding the world. Zinesters implicitly and explicitly understand and resist the structuring principles of normative regimes. The state and related state apparatuses are understood as regimes structured in domination to discursively delimit the acceptable, the authentic, the legitimate, the authorized, and the true. Zinesters demonstrate an awareness of the relationship between nation, race, citizenship, gender, and sexuality as evidenced by their reflections on how the state and those authorized on its behalf (such as mainstream education, media, and corporations) delimit practices that defy nationalist imperatives and normative relations.

Reading, Writing, and Re-presenting as Potentially Transformational Practices

Believing that reading and writing practices can be transformative, I acknowledge the activist potential in borderlands rhetorics and the writing of zines.⁵⁴ Anzaldúa speaks of activist authors who have gone before us as “luchadoras que nos dejaron un legado de protesta y activismo por medio de la pluma” (*This Bridge* 5). The very act of writing zines is undertaken as an act of subversion and revision. Countercultural or oppositional writing in zines represents a technology of potentially transformative recoding, which can produce, promote, and/or reveal diverse community and grassroots literacies.

The writing of the zines I consider is itself an oppositional technology deployed by third-space subjects. As Sandoval notes, “the agent of the third voice is *bound* to the process of differential consciousness and its oppositional technologies” (206). Trinh T. Minh-ha, too, reflects on practices and processes

of writing, though from an explicitly postcolonial perspective.⁵⁵ Her focus is on the fragmented woman-subject as author. She notes that as the “focal point of cultural consciousness and social change, writing weaves into language the complex relations of a subject caught between the problems of race and gender and the practice of literature as the very place where social alienation is thwarted differently according to each specific context” (Minh-ha 6). She goes on to dissect the rituals of writing that give a writer status. She notes that a writer “must *submit* her writings to the law laid down by the corporation of literary/literacy victims and be prepared to *accept* their verdict” (8). Zines are acts of defiance of this ritual. Through their discursive reflections, investigations, and assertions, zines subvert the authority of sanctioned knowledges and practices. Perhaps even more importantly, they exert their own authority through their practices of self-representation and through their knowledge claims. Through self-publishing and the generation of intertextual conversations, zinesters circumvent the sanctioned right of passage to which Minh-ha refers. They do not wait for permission or acceptance to write. The act of production is not allowed but undertaken, often subversively and through what zinesters describe as secretive, after-hours efforts at their and others’ places of employment. The production process of zines is thus, itself, an act of subversion.

Zines offer spaces for exploration as to how third-space subjects are writing and self-representing and reinterpreting his/stories.⁵⁶ Radical rhetorical potential in third-space zines offers what Brownwyn Davies considers “disruptions [that can see] the possibility of breaking down old oppressive structures and of locating and experiencing [them] differently, of moving outside the fixed structures” (39). The tools and technologies deployed in third space are used not only to dismantle (rhetorical) structures but also to build coalitions and community. To speak from and of these coalitions and communities requires creative practices of interpretation and representation.

Exploring Third-Space Zines and the Chapters to Follow

In keeping with my efforts to move beyond binary structures, I am conceptualizing zines on a spectrum or spectrums of practices and transformational potentials. Much of the previous work on zines has focused on zines produced by predominantly alienated youth, often from middle-class positionalities and often in the context of U.S. punk culture. Often critiques of zines are made around the fact that zines are privileged