Reconciling Cultural Diversity with a Democratic Community: *Mestizaje* as Opposed to the Usual Suspects

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A fascinating development within the liberal–communitarian debate is how to deal with cultural diversity in increasingly heterogeneous democracies. Particularly noteworthy are Will Kymlicka’s recasting of liberalism to deal with cultural minorities, especially the indigenous peoples of Canada and Charles Taylor’s and Michael Walzer’s articulation of a ‘deep diversity’ with regard to the federal relationship of Quebec to Canada as a whole. Both approaches, though, insufficiently address how combinations of cultures have been underway in the Americas for the past 500 years. Instead, I contend that *mestizaje*, the combination of cultures which has ensued in Mexico and the United States Southwest, articulates a ‘unity in diversity’ in which cultures transform each other without culminating in assimilation. To bolster my exegesis of *mestizaje* from the works of the Virgil Elizondo and Gloria Anzaldúa, I accent how Jeremy Waldron’s cosmopolitanism, Iris Marion Young’s relational group theory, and Homi Bhabha’s hybridity similarly illustrate how proposals such as Kymlicka’s or Taylor/Walzer’s insufficiently incorporate how integral heterogeneity is to cultural identity. In view of how ‘the border’ between the United States and Mexico exemplifies the growing intersection of diverse cultures from the developed and developing world, *mestizaje* offers that the intersection of multiple cultures in collaborative—not hegemonic—relations is intrinsic to realizing democratic citizenship.

A fascinating development within the liberal–communitarian debate is how to deal with cultural diversity in increasingly heterogeneous democracies. Although communitarian theory would seem to be more capable of dealing with this issue, given its focus on the substantive values and traditions which constitute communities, a new generation of liberal theorists—William Galston (1991), Will Kymlicka (1990a, b, 1995), and Joseph Raz (1986) has sought to move beyond the neutral liberalism of Bruce Ackerman (1980), Ronald Dworkin (1977), and John Rawls (1971, 1985) to explore ‘liberal purposes’ (Galston, 1992).

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1991). Simultaneously, theorists generally considered communitarian such as Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer have moved beyond the politics of homogenous cultural communities to deal with the politics of nation-states with multiple cultures (Taylor, 1993, 1994; Walzer, 1994a, b).

After reviewing both Kymlicka’s and Taylor/Walzer’s positions, I will contend that both approaches insufficiently address how combinations of cultures have been underway in the Americas for the past 500 years. To rectify this deficiency, one needs to consider an approach which is not exclusively European-American or Western, yet is very much an American experience—mestizaje, the combination of cultures which has ensued in Mexico and the United States Southwest. As amplified by US Latino/as such as Gloria Anzaldua and Virgil Elizondo, mestizaje articulates a ‘unity in diversity’ by focusing upon how cultures transform each other without necessarily leading to assimilation.

To bolster this critique of both Kymlicka’s rendering of cultural rights or Taylor/Walzer’s casting of cultural survival, I will discuss the concordance between mestizaje and Jeremy Waldron’s cosmopolitanism, Iris Marion Young’s relational group theory, and Homi Bhabha’s hybridity. Though there are differences between these four perspectives, together they demonstrate that both Kymlicka’s and Taylor/Walzer’s positions are insensitive to how cultural groups daily transform each other. The conventional majority/minority group divide too readily demarcates lines between cultural groups who through interchange actually become hermeneutically entwined.

Kymlicka and Taylor primarily deal with cultural rights issues in Canada. As much as the Canadian government indeed has much more explicitly fostered multiculturalism through law than has the United States, I contend that it is the ‘other border’—between the United States and Mexico—which is much more meaningful for articulating a democratic politics in regard to multiculturalism. For an increasing number of nation-states, dealing with cultural diversity entails resolving the division between cultural groups who ‘have’ and cultural groups who ‘have not’ due to the impact of colonialism, neocolonialism, and now the global economy. One no longer has to evangelize ‘the Third World’ because the peoples of the developing world are now part and parcel of the developed world, or to paraphrase Malcolm X, ‘the chickens have come home to roost’. Enabling both ‘the building of rich community and individual expression’ (Lightfoot, 1989, p. 159) entails articulating a vision of citizenship which sees the intersection of multiple cultures in collaborative, not hegemonic relations, as intrinsic to the realization of democracy.

**Kymlicka: Liberalism with a Cultural Heart**

One would think liberalism, with its strong emphasis on individual rights, could not provide grounds for ensuring cultural communities. It would seem that the norms of such communities would preclude the range of available choices and in some instances endorse illiberal practices—conceivably, the subordination of women to men or vice versa. Will Kymlicka, though, makes an ingenious argument for ‘differential citizenship rights’ within liberalism (1990a, p. 152). Kymlicka maintains the case of the indigenous tribes of Canada illustrates both
the need for justifying cultural rights on liberal grounds and the capacity of liberalism to deal with political communities comprised of heterogeneous cultural communities.

*Cultural Socialization as a Propaedeutic for the Liberal Self*

Instead of an emphasis upon culture being antagonistic to the liberal self, Kymlicka renders culture as essential to the development of self-respect: ‘it is only through having a rich and secure cultural structure, that people can become aware, in a vivid way, of the options available to them, and intelligently examine their value’ (1990a, p. 165). Essentially, socialization through a stable culture enables individuals to develop their capacity for self-reflection and personal choice.

The dilemmas faced by the indigenous tribes in Canada is that unless legal precautions are adopted, the cultures of these tribes could be overwhelmed by the weight of the national culture brought by the outsiders. If indeed, one’s upbringing is ‘a constitutive part of who that person is’, Kymlicka maintains that ‘special political rights’ can ensure ‘that aboriginal communities are as secure as non-aboriginal ones’ (1990a, pp. 175, 1990). Consequently, measures such as denying non-indigenous peoples ‘the right to purchase or reside on Indian lands’, mandating residency requirements for voting and running for public office (to minimize the impact of non-indigenous transient workers in regions with extensive natural resource industries), or maintaining the ‘non-alienability of land’ (so that individual members of the tribes could not take title to the land and sell it) have been proposed or adopted (1990a, pp. 146–7).

Traditionally, for liberals, such proposals to ensure collective rights violate individual liberty: for instance, why should the freedom of non-indigenous individuals to obtain indigenous lands be prevented? The genius of Kymlicka’s argument is that he employs cultural rights toward a liberal end: ensuring that each individual has an equal opportunity to come to a full moral/personal development through which they can direct their life. Kymlicka makes two important distinction to bolster his position.

First, he distinguishes between political and cultural membership. With the former, one pursues ‘the rights and responsibilities entailed by the framework of liberal justice’; with the latter one shares with others ‘a culture, a language and history’ (1990a, p. 135). A heterogenous nation-state will be comprised of multiple cultural communities. Kymlicka focuses not on the cultural norms of these communities, for they could conceivably challenge those of the liberal political community, but rather on ensuring that these communities remain intact to develop individuals who will be able to take full advantage of their political membership.

Second, he distinguishes the circumstances and contexts of choices from the choices themselves: ‘The primary good ... is the cultural community as a context of choice, not the character of the community or its traditional ways of life’ (1990a, p. 172). His argument is not to justify on liberal grounds ‘the shared ends which characterize the culture at any given moment’, but simply to guarantee that each individual grows up a stable cultural environment that will
enable them to make meaningful choices (1990a, p. 172). It is quite possible that eventually a person would choose to leave the tribe to follow their own autonomous path: the key remains to preserve the indigenous culture not for the sake of its traditions, but as a context of choice for its members.

By distinguishing between political and cultural membership and seeing the latter primarily as a context of choice, Kymlicka contends he avoids the communitarian temptation to confuse cultural membership with the shared meanings of a culture. In conclusion, Kymlicka insists that the political community needs to guarantee through law the claims of cultural communities, but in so doing not endorse ‘systems of racial or cultural oppression’ (1990a, p. 255).

Recasting Liberalism with Cultural Affection

Kymlicka articulates a very sophisticated liberalism vis-à-vis the issue of rights for cultural communities. First, in contrast to the communitarian claim that liberalism inaccurately assumes an atomized self, Kymlicka illustrates how important cultural membership is to developing the capacity for self-reflection and individual choice. Second, in contrast to Rawls and Dworkin who assume a homogeneous cultural community for their liberal presentations, he demonstrates how liberalism can deal with heterogeneous political communities.

Third, by moving beyond neutral liberalism to deal with the issue of cultural rights, Kymlicka reinvigorates a strain in liberalism—evident in the work of Mill, Green, Hobhouse, and Dewey—which never disassociated the importance of individual choices from cultural membership:

Mill, Green, Hobhouse, and Dewey were concerned with community, but were not thereby communitarians.... They were as much concerned with the value of individual liberty as anyone before or since. Yet they recognized the importance of our cultural membership to the proper functioning of a well-ordered and just society, and hence they had a different view of the legitimacy of special measures for cultural minorities. (1990a, p. 209)

In the same spirit, Kymlicka pinpoints that liberal theorists between World War I and II ‘considered [it] a victory and virtue of liberalism that the League [of Nations] managed to secure special political status for minority cultural groups in the multinational countries of Europe …’ (1990a, p. 210). Consequently the claim that public policy based on ethnic, racial or culture considerations is a departure from liberalism is hardly the case. Kymlicka draws upon rich resources within liberalism to make the case why neutral liberalism is inadequate for dealing with cultural rights.

Finally, his extensive review of Canadian jurisprudence concerning its indigenous tribes offers an alternative liberal vision of race and culture relations to that contained in the seminal American desegregation case, Brown v. Board—of
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*Education* (1954). *Brown* strikes down legal segregation because it inherently puts a badge of inferiority on the targeted race. But based on the experience of the indigenous tribes of Canada, Kymlicka responds that forced assimilation is no better in terms of fostering human self-development. If African-Americans were forcibly excluded by ‘separate but equal’ public policies, the indigenous tribes are forcibly included unless their cultural communities are legally guaranteed: ‘The crucial difference between blacks and the aboriginal peoples of North America, is, of course, that the latter value their separation from the mainstream life and culture of North America’ (1990a, p. 145). Once again, the key is to foster contexts of choice in which individuals can realize the full extent of their membership: whereas for African-Americans segregation impeded this context, in the case of the Canadian indigenous peoples, it sustains this context.

*Whither the Good?*

Nevertheless, as much as Kymlicka articulates, according to Charles Taylor, ‘the need for an integral and undamaged cultural language with which one can define and pursue his or her own conception of the good life’, his focus is fixed on ensuring individual choices, not the survival of the cultures—the French Canadian accent on ‘survivance’ (Taylor, 1994, pp. 40, 58). As much as Kymlicka moves liberalism beyond a neutral stance toward the consideration of cultural rights, Taylor’s critique focuses our attention on the fact that Kymlicka’s concern is still with procedural individual socialization, not the substantive content of a culture. Kymlicka admits as much by distinguishing between culture as a context of choice and the given set of values of a culture at any one time. Ultimately culture simple seems preparatory to the moment when the individual can transcend their past and direct their own life. No discussion can seemingly ensue in Kymlicka’s approach of a substantive good shared by a heterogenous community.

Regardless, Kymlicka has demonstrated the strength and limitations of liberalism vis-à-vis cultural rights. More like Dewey and Mill than Rawls or Dworkin, Kymlicka acknowledges the vital role cultural socialization plays in the development of individuals who can make mature and meaningful choices. Yet true to the liberal tradition, he pinpoints that the pursuit of cultural rights cannot displace either the need for individual liberties and rights or the need for a critical citizenry.

*Taylor/Walzer: ‘Deep Diversity’ or a Federation of Liberalisms*

Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer offer a perspective on cultural rights more rooted in the substantive concerns of the cultures themselves. Though both thinkers are more communitarian in disposition than Kymlicka, they term their respective approaches liberal. Although I will focus primarily on Taylor’s arguments (1993, 1994), I think it is useful to incorporate Walzer’s commentary on Taylor’s approach (Walzer, 1994a) because it clarifies the key issues which distinguish their articulation of liberalism from the neutral (Rawls and Dworkin) as well as purposive (Kymlicka) types.
The Universal-particular Bind

Taylor, in broad philosophical terms, notes that the concerns raised by minority cultural groups is a variation of the universal–particular nexus. Liberalism invokes universal rights which apply to each individual as an individual whereas cultural groups want to affirm their particular identity. Kymlicka’s effort to move beyond a ‘difference-blind’ liberalism (Taylor, 1994, p. 40) still focuses on culture as a means to facilitate each individual’s realization of their universal rights.

What cultural groups pinpoint about so-called ‘difference-blind’ standards, according to Taylor, is the latter is actually a particular masquerading as a universal to which all other cultures must conform: ‘The claim is that the supposedly neutral set of difference-blind principles of the politics of equal dignity is in fact a reflection of one hegemonic culture’ (1994, p. 43). If this is true, one cannot dismiss discussion of shared values, traditions, and norms in a liberal democracy for these issues are intrinsically tied up with the political community. How does one then reconcile the values of diverse cultures in a heterogeneous nation-state?

Dual Liberalisms in Canada

Specifically, Taylor and in turn Walzer distinguish between two liberalisms in Canada. Canada, as a whole, through the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights, has adopted essentially Dworkin’s neutral, universal rights, ‘procedural’ liberalism, or what Walzer terms ‘Liberalism 1’ (Taylor, 1994, pp. 56–8; Walzer, 1994a, p. 99). This Charter lists a set of individual rights and provides for equal protection of individuals under the law. No particular substantive outlook on the good life is put forth. The state cannot engage, as Walzer puts it, in any ‘cultural or religious projects or, indeed, any sort, of collective goals beyond the personal freedom and the physical security of its citizens’ (1994a, p. 99).

Therefore, any attempt by any minority or cultural group to promote collective goals, Taylor indicates, not only violates the Charter, but is seen as ‘inherently discriminatory’ (1994, p. 55). Specifically, ‘English Canada’, he conveys, is very leery of public policies in Quebec which seek to preserve French Canadian culture such as laws that (1) determine who can send their children to English-language schools, (2) stipulate that businesses with more than 50 employees be run in French, or (3) prohibit commercial signs in any language other than French—the latter was in fact struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada (1994, pp. 52–3). Indeed, this basic distrust of collective goals, Taylor contends, led to the failure of the Meech Lake accords—an attempt nationwide ‘to recognize Quebec as a “distinct society” ’ (1994, p. 53).

The other liberalism, according to Taylor, is Quebec’s endeavor to constitute a community ‘around a definition of the good life, without this being seen as a depreciation of those who do not share this definition’ (1994, p. 59). Specifically, French Canadians seek survivance: ‘It is axiomatic for Quebec governments that the survival and flourishing of French culture in Quebec is a good’ (1994, p. 58). Walzer terms this approach as ‘Liberalism 2’, whereby ‘a particular nation,
culture, or religion' is promoted while simultaneously guaranteeing the civil rights of everyone, regardless of their backgrounds (1994a, p. 99).

Consequently, a 'difference-blind' liberalism is insufficient to meet the substantive concerns of French Canadians. As Taylor pinpoints, they 'do not see themselves as being in the same historical position as immigrants' (1993, p. 11). They see any endeavor to reduce them to being just one of many hyphenated ethnic/racial groups as repulsive. In the same vein, it is insufficient just to ensure that they 'have the option to speak French', because what is at stake is the perpetuation of a substantive culture, 'a community of people ... that will want to avail itself of the opportunity to use the French language' (1994, p. 58).

Without a doubt, Taylor's defense of French Canadians makes present and future cultural integrity a central feature of public policy: 'They are willing to weight the importance of certain forms of uniform treatment against the importance of cultural survival, and opt sometimes in favor of the latter' (1994, p. 61). But how does this recasting of liberalism guarantee the civil rights of non-French Canadians in Quebec? Taylor argues only privileges and immunities such as language signs can be restricted through public policy, not inalienable liberties. Quebec's adherence to liberalism should be measured by how it treats its minorities (1994, p. 59).

'Deep Diversity'

Even if 'la nation Canadian franchise' guarantees the inalienable rights of non-French Canadians in Quebec, how does one then reconcile the 'Liberalism 1' of English Canada with the 'Liberalism 2' of French Canada (Taylor, 1993, p. 165)? Taylor proposes a 'deep diversity'. Institutionally, this would involve an asymmetrical federalism where the present distribution of powers between the federal and provincial governments would remain intact except for Quebec. Quebec in addition to its present powers, would also assume responsibility for labor, communication, agricultural, and fishing policy among other areas whereas the federal government would be relegated to overseeing defense, foreign affairs, and currency (1993, p. 147). In fact, Taylor adds an asymmetrical federalism is already in place insofar as 'Quebec is the only province that raises its own taxes, has its own pension plans, is active in immigration, and so on' (1993, p. 150). This reality just needs to be reconciled with Canada's 'constitution texts' (1993, p. 150).

The most salient consequence of this asymmetrical arrangement is that the Quebec provincial government could sustain through public policy a substantive sense of cultural practices distinct from the rest of Canada. Taylor proposes that Canada institute multiple types of citizenship: most of English Canada would articulate a mosaic understanding of national identity in which individuals stressed a common Canadian identity while still taking pride in their various ethnicities, whereas French and indigenous Canadians would stress their particular ethnicities while still remaining Canadians (1993, p. 183). These plural models of citizenship, he contends, would mediate the present impasse in which the English Canadians stress national allegiance to Canada and relegate French
Canadians to being just one ethnicity among many, while the French Canadians insist that Canada is 'a pact between “two nations”' (1993, p. 102).

Without a doubt, through ‘deep diversity’ Taylor wants to move between the universal and particular, procedural and substantive, unitary and separatist poles of the cultural rights debate in the context of liberalism. He finds the simple guarantee that every citizen in Canada will be given equal protection under the law, which has led to the protection of the French language, insufficient to guarantee French culture. By the same token, he opposes any Quebec separatism which would reject the historic and economic ties of Quebec to the rest of Canada. Instead, he urges ‘a national life founded on diversity’, in which the determination of Canada’s identity would be debated politically ‘without definitive closure, between a plurality of legitimate options’ (1993, p. 132). Such a unity without uniformity would allow ‘one group to breathe without imposing its model on the other’ and simultaneously offer a basis for constructive dialogue (1993, p. 200).

In larger terms, Taylor adds, that ‘deep diversity’ is not just relevant to the peculiarities of Canada, for ‘in many parts of the world today the degree and nature of the differences resemble those of Canada rather than the United States’ (1993, p. 183). Essentially, the ‘uniform model of citizenship’ of ‘Liberalism 1’ has had its day: the next century belongs to yet to be articulated versions of ‘deep diversity’ as more and more countries, due to international migration, are communities of substantive ethnic communities (1993, pp. 183, 199–200).

*Mutual Accommodation Rather than Penetration*

Walzer moves Taylor’s recasting of liberalism in terms of ‘deep diversity’ beyond the Canadian situation. Walzer points out that a liberalism which stresses a particular substantive culture yet ensures the civil liberties and rights of non-cultural members—‘Liberalism 2’—is actually closer to the past and present practices of European nation-states than is ‘Liberalism 1’. On the other hand, he maintains ‘Liberalism 1’ is appropriate for the United States because it is a ‘nation of nationalities’ in which ‘there is no privileged majority and there are no exceptional majorities’ (Walzer, 1994a, p. 100). Government guarantees of cultural group survival in the United States, he argues, would entail much more extensive violation of individual rights than anything undertaken by Quebec (1994, p. 102). Walzer’s critical point is that by choosing ‘Liberalism 1’ from within ‘Liberalism 2’ one has moved beyond a universal or ‘absolute commitment to state neutrality and individual rights’ as well as any ‘deep dislike of particularist identities …’ (1994a, p. 103).

Like Kymlicka, the Taylor/Walzer argument moves liberalism beyond its past neutral, procedural, or ‘difference-blind’ trappings. In comparison with Kymlicka, Taylor/Walzer place much more importance on the substantive distinctiveness of cultures: cultural sensitivity is not just reduced to being concerned about the context of choice so that each person can realize their universal rights. Second, in contrast to Kymlicka’s separation of political and cultural membership, Taylor/Walzer render liberal democracy as being constituted through cultural norms, not apart from them. In the end, Kymlicka replaces neutral
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liberalism with a liberalism sensitive to cultural rights for individuals whereas Taylor/Walzer more radically propose a plurality of liberalisms to sustain substantive cultures.

If Kymlicka’s stance ultimately still leans towards universalism or assimilation, Taylor/Walzer’s solution tends toward particularism or separatism. Taylor establishes the possibility of formats of Canadian citizenship other than the mosaic model (a subtle variation of universalist model), but does not seriously pursue how these different citizens and cultures would transform each other, consonant with the emphasis on intersubjectivity in his philosophical works. He simply seeks a mutual accommodation between two or more distinct ways of being Canadian.

Nor does Walzer’s notion of choosing Liberalism 1 from Liberalism 2 salvage matters: either a nation-state cultivates a principal culture while ensuring the liberties and rights of non-members or, when too many diverse cultures make that impossible, opts for a liberalism which focuses on a procedural rather than on the hermeneutical interaction between diverse citizens. As much as Kymlicka just focuses on an individual’s context of choice, one can at least project from his approach how an individual’s outlook could come to reflect a combination of indigenous and other Canadian cultures. Though Taylor/Walzer provide a more substantive articulation of culture in the context of liberalism than does Kymlicka, they do not engage the reality of substantive entwining between cultures other than in assimilationist (mosaic identity) or separatist (French or indigenous Canadian) terms.

Mestizaje: Did We Cross the Border or Did the Border Cross Us?

Taylor and more so Walzer invoke too readily the stereotype of the United States as a ‘melting pot’ of hyphenated Americans whose ethnic/cultural loyalties lack the depth or intensity of French Canadians or European national identities and hence, constitute a suitable terrain for ‘Liberalism 1’. As accented by Susan Wolf, though, recognizing multiple cultures in education and public debates in the United States is not to discover and place the great works of African, Asian, Native American, or other cultures on a par with American/European works, but to acknowledge that these non-European cultures are ‘part of our culture’ (Wolf, 1994, p. 81). To provide a more dynamic rendering of the interrelationship of diverse cultures, to overcome the misleading representation of America’s diversity by Taylor/Walzer, and to offer a vision of cultural diversity between the poles of universal rights and particular cultural commitments, I turn to the notion of mestizaje in Mexican and Mexican American studies. Mestizaje stresses that cultures can transform each other without the outcome being assimilation to the dominant culture and extermination of minority cultures.

Origins of Mestizaje

Mestizaje originally refers to how the Mexican race and culture was created through the mixing of the Spanish conquerors, the previously existing indigenous tribes, and the African slaves brought by the Spaniards. What we know as Mexican is distinct from the contributing Spanish, indigenous, and African
cultures, yet retains elements of each. In contrast to Kymlicka’s concern for preserving the indigenous tribes for liberal reasons or Taylor’s preoccupation with the *survivance* of French Canadians, *mestizaje* focuses how cultures hermeneutically transform each other without either one necessarily becoming hegemonic. For example, Our Lady of Guadalupe, the revered religious symbol especially of Mexicans and Mexican Americans, at first seems Spanish because of the Catholicism of the conquistadors and the name itself can be traced back to the dark Virgin revealed in West Central Spain, yet she appears in indigenous form to the native Juan Diego on the hill of Tepayac where the Aztec goddess, ‘*Tonantzi*’, had been traditionally worshipped and identifies herself in Nahuatl as ‘*Coatlaloqueh*’ (Anzaldua, 1987, pp. 28–29).

How is this development in Mexico relevant to the preceding discussions of cultural diversity? As we head into the next century, as Octavio Paz notes, a decentering of cultures is happening in which many cultures increasingly find themselves simply as one among many:

[Mexicans] have always lived on the periphery of history. Now the center or nucleus of world society has disintegrated and everyone—including the European and the North American—is a peripheral being. We are all living on the margin because there is no longer any center. (Paz, 1985, p. 170)

Specifically, a new *mestizaje* is emerging along the US–Mexican border, this time not between Spaniards, indigenous people, and African slaves, but as Carlos Fuentes puts it, between ‘the northern, Protestant, capitalistic culture of the United States, and the southern, Mediterranean Catholic culture of Latin America’ (Fuentes, 1989, p. 506). This Mexican–American nexus offers direction on how to generate a sense of community through the intersection of cultures in a world is which the ‘North–South’ contest between ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ is rapidly displacing the dated Cold War framework of ‘East–West’ global relations.

*CROSSING BORDERS: THE NEW MESTIZAJE IN THE SOUTHWESTERN US*

Among US Latino/a thinkers, Virgil Elizondo, a Mexican American Catholic theologian, has developed extensively the implications of the crossroads in the US Southwest between Anglos (European-Americans) and Mexican Americans. The plight of the Mexican American is emblematic of a new *mestizaje* experienced by those caught between the Mexican and American traditions. When growing up in San Antonio, Texas, Elizondo relates that he ‘was not just US-American and not just Mexican but fully both and exclusively neither’ (1988, p. 26): discrimination, even during his seminary studies, made it painfully clear that he was a Mexican—a ‘greaser’—to the Anglos, but likewise his relatives in Mexico were quick to remind him that he was a *pocho*, an American of Mexican descent (1988, p. 20).

Rather than seeing this hybrid identity—the half-breed—as a drawback, Elizondo contends there is a positive dynamism which emerges from such
mutual entanglement of cultures: those who live on the margin between cultures do not fear other cultures because the combination of cultures is their very existence. Rather than just focusing on sustaining cultures through a liberal scheme of rights or a federalism which would give some political autonomy to sub-cultures, mestizaje provokes us to recognize (1) how cultures transform each other and (2) that a vibrant sense of community life lies in embracing the intersection of different cultures. The quandary of Mexican Americans as caught ‘in-between’ cultures, rather than being negative, becomes exemplary for more and more of us who find that (1) dealing with other cultures has become part and parcel of our everyday experience and (2) personal and community well-being can be fostered through such encounters.

In contrast to the assimilation scheme of the ‘melting pot’, the US Southwest is a combination of Anglo, native American and Mexican cultures (and increasingly Asian- and African-American cultures) without the Anglo culture in all instances being hegemonic. Mexican settlements date back to the eighteenth century in California and Texas and to the seventeenth century in New Mexico. The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which concluded the US–Mexico War of 1846–1848, confirmed that the border between the US and Mexico in Texas would be the Rio Grande, but in the area north of this river to the Rio Nueces (flowing roughly from San Antonio to Corpus Christi) were Mexican settlements. Hence, the border crossed Mexicans rather than they crossed the border. Today, both Mexican Americans and Mexicans alike refer to the other side of the US–Mexico border as el otro lado (the other side), suggesting merely a legal rather than cultural disruption between the two regions.

It is true that many of the Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and in turn migrants from Central America living in the United States today come after 1848. But be it the massive migration north to escape the Mexican Revolution in the 1910s and 1920s, the solicited migration by the US government through the Bracero programs of the 1940s and 1950, or the more recent migration from Mexico and Central America in the 1980s and 1990s to escape economic and/or political turmoil, these people entering the US Southwest are entering a land that once constituted half the size of Mexico and has a historical and cultural tie to Mexico and Central America dating back to the early 1500s. It is more accurate to describe these travelers as migrants rather than as immigrants: they may be entering another country legally, but they arrive at a region whose culture has been as Mexican or Latino/a in orientation as much as Anglo. To understand the history of the US Southwest, one needs to engage it both as an East-to-West expansion of primarily European-Americans and as a South-to-North expansion of Mexicans and other Latino/as: the intersection of these axes is the new mestizaje of the past century and a half.

Is there other evidence, other than historical arguments, to substantiate this new mestizaje? The United States is the fifth largest Spanish-speaking country in the world. In major communication markets like Houston and Los Angeles, there are numerous Spanish-speaking radio stations and more to the point, stations that move back and forth naturally between English and Spanish throughout their broadcasts, not to provide simultaneous translation, but because
their audience speaks ‘Spanglish’. In turn, Tejano music, indigenous to Texas, is the integration of Mexican music styles with German and Czech dances.

Even in a city such as Houston, Texas, which was founded by Anglos after the Texas fight for independence, the plurality of the population is now Latino/a and sights normally associated with Mexican cities are beginning to dot the landscape, such as vendors selling their wares on street corners to passing motorists, and Spanish billboards. Undoubtedly, one still needs to learn English to have a meaningful chance at success in American society, but in Miami, Los Angeles, and Houston, a working knowledge of both English and Spanish is increasingly important for professional success. This trend will only be reinforced by advances in transportation and telecommunication networks which enable Mexican Americans and other Latino/as to keep in contact with relatives in Latin America much more easily than immigrants from Europe and other places could with their homelands a century ago. A nueva raza is emerging along the border from Texas to California whereby Mexican Americans are becoming Anglocized while simultaneously Anglo and other Americans are becoming Mexicanized: ‘Neither group is simply allowing the other in; rather both are forming a new human space wherein all feel more at home’ (Elizondo, 1988, p. 56).

The Agonal Side of Mestizaje

Before becoming too ‘Polyannish’ regarding mestizaje, one has to acknowledge the great degree to which strife and struggle are also integral to cultural intersections. First, although the culture of the US Southwest is a combination of Mexican, Anglo, and other ethnic/racial practices, most Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and other Latino/as in this region of the country are poor—Anglos still dominate the political and economic systems. Second, within both Mexican and Mexican American culture, it remains true that the more light-skinned one is and the more your complexion retains European features, the greater your potential for professional success and high social status. There remains a hierarchy of race and skin-color from light to dark in these supposedly mixed cultures. In turn, mestizos or ladinos, as they are termed in Guatemala, have been persecutors of indigenous peoples in Latin America (Menchu, 1984).

The agonal dimension of mestizaje, though, lies primarily in the process of cross-cultural transformation. Gloria Anzaldúa, the Mexican American lesbian poet, has vividly captured the stress and situation of those who cross borders, be it the US–Mexico territorial border, the Anglo–Mexican cultural border, or the male–female and straight–gay symbolic borders.

Anzaldúa emphasizes the subordination of indigenous people and women in the Spanish conquest of Mexico. The three salient figures for Mexican and Mexican American women—La Virgen de Guadalupe, La Chingada, and La Llorona—she stresses have symbolically suppressed Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Guadalupe, ‘the virgin mother who has not abandoned us’, has also made ‘us docile and enduring’ (Anzaldúa, 1987, pp. 30–1). La Chingada, ‘the raped mother who we have abandoned’ has made ‘us ashamed of our Indian
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side’ (1987, pp. 30–1). Finally, la Llorona, ‘the mother who seeks her lost children’ has made ‘us a long-suffering people’ (1987, pp. 30–1).

Anzaldúa captures that in mestizaje ‘The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference causes un choque, a cultural collision’ (1987, p. 78). Still, like Elizondo, she maintains it is precisely the Mexican American experience with such collisions that offers a basis for combining opposites. For instance, rather than Mexican Americans making apologies to Anglos for their bastard English or to Mexicans for their bastard Spanish, she insists Mexican Americans should engage these other groups from the dignity of being mestizol/as:

Presently this infant language, this bastard language, Chicano Spanish, is not approved by any society. But we Chicanos no longer feel that we need to make entrance, that we need always to make the first overture—to translate to Anglos, Mexicans, and Latinos, apology blurtling out of our mouths with every step. Today we asked to be met halfway. (1987, Preface)

Being a mestiza for Anzaldúa is a state of being which can tolerate ambiguity and contradictions that arise from the encounter between cultures in the borderlands: ‘Neither eagle nor serpent, but both. And like the ocean, neither animal respects borders’ (1987, p. 62).

The historical, empirical, and existential legacy of mestizaje in the US Southwest suggests a path ‘in-between’ the ‘either–ors’ of assimilation, v. separatism or universal rights v. particular cultures. As noted by Elizondo:

Mestizos may struggle to become one or the other of the great traditions out of which they are born, but even if they were to succeed, that would be a mere return to the previous divisions of society. We [mestizos] usher in new life for the betterment of everyone when we consciously assume the great traditions flowing through our veins, not by denying them but by synthesizing them into something new. (1988, p. 84)

In contrast to Kymlicka’s or Taylor’s treatment of minority communities as being distinct from a larger whole, mestizaje renders the interaction between as a politics of intersubjective relations as opposed to the ‘us v. them’ politics of possessive identity. Rather than eliminating cultural difference through ‘melting pots’ or petrifying difference in separatist schemes, mestizaje exemplifies a ‘unity in diversity’ through the hermeneutical interchange of cultures.

Survivance by Subversive Engagement

There are at least two rejoinders to my illustration of the implications of mestizaje for dealing with cultural diversity in democracies. First, even though mestizaje has been part-and-parcel to the US Southwest, Anglos remain the dominant economic partner in the interchange between Anglos and Latinos. In
the US there is hardly a parity between the two cultures and internationally, American consumer culture is rapidly engulfing the globe—note the ‘Wal-Martization’ of Mexico since NAFTA. Second, apart from this reality, the French Canadians and indigenous peoples throughout the Americas seemingly will still insist upon separatist schemes which insure cultural *survivance* rather than the cultural mixing of *mestizaje*.

'We May Not Overcome, But We Will Overwhelm'

No doubt, the marketing of American consumer culture is pervasive throughout the globe and indeed most Mexican and Latino/a Americans are subordinate players in the US economy. Many Latino/as in the US do assimilate to the dominant culture, like previous immigrants, to the US, within three generations and indeed, there is a glaring underrepresentation of Latino/as in political assemblies.

On the other hand, there is the growing presence of US Latino/as as a counter-culture. Mexican traditions such as *posadas* at Christmas time and *quinceañeras* when young ladies turn 15 are flourishing, not disappearing in the US. More to the point, when Mexicans and other Latino/as are entering the US over the territorial boundary between the US and Mexico they are entering as migrants, not as immigrants—a consciousness highlighted by the Chicano movement in the notion of Atzlan, that they are ‘from here’, not from some faraway place. Over the past 150 years, in many counties in South Texas, Spanish has remained the principal language. Moreover, based on projected *birth not migration rates* by Texas A&M University, by the year 2030, close to two-thirds of the countries in Texas will have Latino/a populations of at least 40% (Texas A&M University System, 1996). This data obviously cannot promise eventual political and economic parity between Anglos and Latino/as in Texas, but it does suggest that the quiet confidence with which many Latino's manifest their culture will probably be more pervasive.

In contrast to the French Canadians, Mexican Americans, with some exceptions among Chicano/a activists, are not paranoid about losing their culture, but rather pursue their cultural *mores* in the face of domination by Anglos and others. Such quiet persistence is nothing new: just as Mexicans outlasted the colonialism of the Spanish and then the French (nineteenth century), Mexican Americans have been enduring the neocolonialism of the Anglos for the past century and a half. In all three instances, the unstated tactic is not to confront the dominant culture in a direct fashion but to engage it in a steady but *subversive* fashion, as water currents wear down a rock in a stream (Park, 1996, p. 100). In the words of one Mexican American from Los Angeles: ‘we may not overcome, but we will overwhelm’ (Public Broadcasting Service, 1993).

*Anglo Paranoia and the Myopic Cast of Indigenous Peoples’ Separatism*

Indeed, Anglos are the group that is paranoid, given the recent rash of initiatives in California for ‘English-only’ and the denial of government services to undocumented aliens and against affirmative action and bilingual education.
Reconciling Cultural Diversity

Without a doubt, these initiatives endeavor to marginalize Latino/a and other non-European-American cultures in the name of an assimilated American identity through which Anglos remain hegemonic. But such initiatives simultaneously testify to the pervasiveness of mestizo/a culture in the US Southwest: ‘When you get a proposition in California to vote the English language as the official language of the State of California, this only means one thing—that English is no longer the official language of the State of California (Fuentes, 1989, p. 506). Such repression is hardly new to Latino/as and is nowhere near as brutal as the stealing of land grants by Anglos after the 1846–1848 war or subsequent discrimination by Anglo-dominated political and law enforcement authorities.

Against this backdrop, it is the paranoia of US Anglos, not the subversive engagement by US Latinos, which resembles the defensive nationalism of the French Canadians. Acknowledging Simone Chambers’ conclusion that there have been some English Canadians and French Canadians within Quebec constructively engaging in a Habermasian politics of discourse (Chambers, 1996), by and large, French Canadians fear their culture will not survive in a cultural blurring such as mestizaje. Those preoccupied with the survivance of French Canadian culture manifest in a separatist mode what many US Anglos project in an assimilationist mode—cultural identity as a possession to be preserved, not as a dynamic engagement of difference.

Indigenous tribes in the Americas constitute the best case for solutions such as Kymlicka’s cultural rights or Taylor’s asymmetrical federalism because they are the longstanding peoples whose lands and ways of life were conquered by the European colonizers. Granting this concession, Native American activists such as Vine Deloria go too far when they insist upon the wide chasm between the spiritual and cultural practices of indigenous peoples and the mores of the Europeans and European Americans (Deloria, 1988, 1994). Mestizaje in Mexico and the US Southwest illustrates how the spiritual and cultural practices of Latinos have roots in the practices of American indigenous peoples, Africans, and medieval Europeans. Popular religion, a combination of indigenous peoples’ and Catholic spiritual practices, especially among the poor, has always coexisted with and has served as a counter-culture to the official norms of Catholicism (Espin, 1997). Mestizaje cannot preserve indigenous or for that matter any culture in a pure sense as well as separatism might, but for five centuries it has enabled indigenous cultures to have a transformative impact on presumably dominant cultures.

Kindred Spirits

Mestizaje is hardly the only notion that acknowledges the ongoing blurring of cultures. A similar theme is captured in Jeremy Waldron’s cosmopolitanism, Marion Young’s relational concept of group difference, and Homi Bhabha’s sense of hybridity. These outlooks refuse to make strict separations between majority/dominant cultures and minority/subordinate cultures which still preoccupies Kymlicka and Taylor.
Cosmopolitanism, Relational Group Theory, and Hybridity

Instead of Kymlicka’s focus on how to reconcile cultural rights with the liberal focus on individual autonomy or communitarianism’s attempt to ensure that a person’s identity is grounded in a stable set of social practices, Waldron emphasizes that for an increasing number of people, their identity comes from a combination of cultures which they have chosen:

The cosmopolitan may live all his life in one city and maintain the same citizenship throughout. But he refuses to think of himself as defined by his location or his ancestry or his citizenship or his language. Though he may live in San Francisco and be of Irish ancestry, he does not take his identity to be compromised when he learns Spanish, eats Chinese, wears clothes made in Korea, listens to arias by Verdi sung by a Maori princess on Japanese equipment, follows Ukrainian politics, and practices Buddhist meditation techniques. He is a creature of modernity, conscious of living in a mixed-up world and having a mixed-up self. (Waldron, 1995, p. 95)

Waldron’s cosmopolitan combines the emphasis on the importance of the substance of culture stressed by the communitarianism with the autonomy praised by liberals.

Young, in contrast to Waldron, does not just focus on how individuals mix and match diverse cultures, but how cultures are in relationship to each other: ‘a more fluid, explicitly relational conception of difference’ (Young, 1995, p. 161). Similar to Anzaldua, she accents how borders are basically undecidable; in contrast to the homogenous public which eliminates difference or the separatist public which protects difference, Young articulates ‘the heterogenous public’ (1995, p. 167).

Even though groups and cultures may be distinct, Young accentuates they do have a political and economic impact on each other in the contemporary world. Rather then replicate the cultural strife which has surrounded Bosnia-Herzegovnia or mitigate it by an abstract liberal individualism, Young contends that there are ‘heterogenous publics … that guarantee respect for the cultural specificity and needs of different groups’ (1995, p. 170). In these heterogenous publics, it is perfectly appropriate to provide for representation of such groups in political decision-making processes, especially if these groups are ‘oppressed or disadvantaged’ (1995, p. 165). As an example, Young discusses how the two principal cultures of New Zealand—Maori and Pakeha (European) have formally ensured access by both groups to the state’s political structures; as a result, there is an equitable distribution of economic goods between the two groups. Lani Guinier’s creative alternatives to the longstanding prevailing ways of ensuring minority representation in the US to a certain degree reflects Young’s ethos (Guinier, 1994).

Finally, Habib Bhabha’s articulation of hybridity and transculturation is very akin to the multifaceted juxtaposition of cultural boundaries in mestizaje.
According to Bhabha, what constitutes a nation is not a clearly identifiable authoritarian set of cultural *mores* and practices, but contesting perspectives whose boundaries are constantly shifting and which have a transformative impact on each other. National memory, thus, is a hybrid of histories communicated through agonal incommensurability rather than through cozy consensus (Bhabha, 1990a,b).

Three principle points amplify Bhabha’s position. First, rather than seeing nations or large cultural systems as homogenous units, we need to recognize them as being ambivalent creations composed of many cultures who daily engage and transform each other. What is means to be a nation, thus, is always under composition. Second, according to Bhabha, once we acknowledge the multiple and shifting cultures which comprise nations, we must envision marginal cultures as interventions which unsettle modernity’s justifications for the ‘authoritarian’ or ‘normalizing’ tendencies of culture (Bhabha, 1990b, p. 4). Third, once we admit that national identities are thus fluid, ‘discontinuous’, and ‘interruptive’, we uncover a *modus vivendi* for engaging other nations and peoples: ‘the anti-nationalist, ambivalent nation-space, becomes the crossroads to a new transnational culture’ (1990b, p. 4).

**Differences from Mestizaje**

There are differences between *mestizaje* and Waldron’s, Young’s, and Bhabha’s perspectives. At first glance, *mestizaje* resembles cosmopolitanism in that both stress that individuals can be combinations of culture. Waldron’s cosmopolitan, though, chooses and combines the myriad of cultural artifacts which comprise his/her makeup: personal identity is a kaleidoscope of cultures, but one largely directed by *egocentrism*. By contrast, in *mestizaje*, the self can only be understood against the horizon of the community’s combination of cultural practices. *Mestizaje* is not a matter or creating one’s identity from among many possibilities like food items from a cafeteria, but of dealing with the fact that one’s identity is simultaneously enmeshed in multiple cultural backgrounds. *Mestizaje* articulates that a multifaceted person, culture, or community is not just a matter of choice, but one of unfolding rich, complex, hermeneutical histories.

Young, more so than Waldron comes closer to *mestizaje’s* emphasis on how cultures and communities are in interrelationship with each other. Still, Young’s case study of New Zealand focuses more on enabling access of the Maori to the economic and political decision-making process previously dominated by the Pakeha than upon how the Maori and Pakeha cultures transform each other in the manner of *mestizaje*. In turn, *mestizaje* would not necessarily lead one, for instance, to employ proportional representation for decision-making bodies because that would petrify each culture in a corporatist fashion. Instead, one would pursue reforms which do not segregate cultures into geographic enclaves and do not prevent individuals from crossing cultural boundaries. Young’s perspective is able to show how cultures are linked politically and economically, but does not capture their hermeneutic nexus.

Bhabha’s discussion of the narrative of nationhood is most closely linked to the substantive mutual transformation of cultures in *mestizaje*. Still, Bhabha’s
articulation of this process is very much in the postmodern vein, that practically any construction of nationhood simultaneously begets counter-practices which keep this construction from being set or closed. In some respects Bhabha’s articulation of nationhood bares some similarity to Waldron’s cosmopolitanism in that both accent the dynamic melange of cultures which constitute narratives. On the other hand, whereas Waldron’s cosmopolitan self directs the composition of their identity, in Bhabha’s hybridity, national identity is so variegated and ambivalent that border crossings disrupt any clear definition of community—the narrative is always in process.

Mestizaje shares hybridity’s accent on multiple cultures and their mutual interpenetration, but has a much stronger sense of a specific history and set of traditions which inform border crossings: the original mixing of the Spanish, indigenous, and African peoples to form the Mexican race and in turn the more recent engagement between Anglo, Latino/a, and other cultures in the US Southwest. In contrast to hybridity, the hermeneutics of mestizaje, especially when articulated by US Latino/a theologians such as Elizondo, resembles Gadamer more than Derrida in its approach. Indeed, though Latino/a culture stresses ‘both/and’ rather than ‘either—or’, there remains on the horizon a vivid heritage from over five centuries which informs the Latino/a search for a concrete universal.

Hermeneutic v. Hegemonic Cultural Interchange

To become preoccupied with the differences between cosmopolitanism, relational groups theory, hybridity, and mestizaje, though, is to miss their mutual insight that contrary to either Kymlicka’s or Taylor/Walzer’s outlooks, multiple transformations of cultures are the course of community or national life. Rather than being stuck in ‘us v. them’ frameworks, we need to (1) acknowledge that it is the degree of blurring that is at stake in public debates regarding the interaction between cultures, not the fact of blurring itself, and (2) engage in political theory that reflects this reality that cultures are more intrinsic than extrinsic to each other.

The approaches of Kymlicka and Taylor/Walzer thus need to engage the implications of mestizaje in order to have more plausibility. It is more difficult for Kymlicka to do so, despite the significance he places on the cultural socialization of individuals, because of the primacy of the liberal self in his framework. In Taylor’s case, it is much more possible, because of the accent on intersubjectivity in his general philosophy. Hence, rather than a ‘dual federalism’, Taylor needs to develop a ‘multi-faceted federalism’ which places less emphasis on territorial units and more emphasis on political participation procedures, deliberative legislative forums, and execution of public policy outcomes, in the manner of Young, which enable the contest and transformation between cultures to ensue in a democratic, not hegemonic way. Engaging the power relationships between the cultures which infuse our political communities is a major and necessary step toward realizing the prospect of genuine dialogue between equals—to be democratic citizens.
Reconciling Cultural Diversity

Conclusion

The focus of *mestizaje* on the hermeneutical relationship between cultures and its implication for realizing democracy is absent in two of the prevailing models for reconciling cultural rights with the norms and institutions of liberal democracy—Kymlicka’s purposive liberalism and Taylor/Walzer’s ‘deep diversity’.

Kymlicka makes a powerful case for justifying cultural rights for the indigenous tribes of Canada on liberal grounds. By recognizing the importance of cultural membership to developing political citizenship, he advances liberalism beyond the neutral approaches of Rawls and Dworkin and resuscitates the liberalism of Mill and Dewey insofar as they argued that individual well-being was entangled with community and culture. At the same time, Kymlicka merely recognizes that cultural socialization is essential to individual development; Taylor is quite right that Kymlicka cannot guarantee the survival of the indigenous tribes because he only stresses cultural membership, not shared cultural meanings. Kymlicka’s liberalism may be purposive but it still eschews the substantive sense of community experienced by a cultural group.

Taylor is much more sensitive to why shared cultural meanings are integral to political participation. His depiction of neutral liberalism or Kymlicka’s purposive alternative cannot guarantee the French-Canadian insistence on *survivance*. French Canadians cannot support a liberal democracy which is not imbued with their culture. Rejecting separatism, Taylor seeks a ‘deep diversity’ which would enable Quebec, within a Canadian federation, to articulate public policy which affirmed French-Canadian *mores*. Taylor renders his vision as a unity without uniformity or a pluralism which neither culminates in neutral liberalism or conversely separatism.

Walzer’s amplification of Taylor pinpoints that most liberalisms are actually those of ‘Liberalism 2’ whereby cultural norms are guaranteed without violation of the liberties and rights of the members of other cultural groups. Neutral liberalism or ‘Liberalism 1’, he adds, is only appropriate for nations such as the United States, whose diversity is so extensive that perpetuating ethnic, racial, and religious cultures through law would threaten basic civil liberties and rights.

Though Taylor/Walzer recognize more than Kymlicka the role cultural norms play in liberal democracies, they do not advance the notion that diverse cultures can transform each other to engender a community which both reflects and is distinct from the contributing cultures. They are simply more willing than Kymlicka to justify predominant cultural norms in liberal democratic terms and opt for a federal scheme when this cultural community is a part of a larger country—Quebec *vis-à-vis* Canada. Kymlicka actually is more sensitive to how individuals can change their belief systems, but he does not engage this dynamic in terms of cultures. Neither Kymlicka nor Taylor/Walzer move the discussion of engendering community while recognizing difference in heterogenous liberal democracies beyond the majority/minority divide.

By contrast, Waldron’s cosmopolitanism, Young’s relational group theory, and Bhabha’s accent on hybridity, similar to *mestizaje*, provide a much more complicated but realistic account of how diverse cultures are entwined in
personal, group, and community life. Whereas Kymlicka and Taylor/Walzer accept the notion of the constitutive identity shaped by cultural groups in the communitarian vision and then try to reconcile this vision with a liberal framework, these alternative perspectives provide a much more incisive challenge to both the ‘thin’ neutral atomized liberal self and the ‘thick’ constituted communitarian self. Cosmopolitanism, relational group theory, hybridity, and mestizaje render cultural identity, not as a possession to be preserved, but as a kaleidoscopic intersubjective relationship between ‘others’.

The contribution of mestizaje to this debate is that crossing borders is intrinsic to mestizaje and is not a matter relegated to the periphery. If Paz is right that all nations and cultures increasingly find themselves on the periphery, then the Mexican and Mexican American experience with mestizaje, albeit with its many historic warts and drawbacks, offers some very valuable direction for a world moving beyond Eurocentrism. In light of Enrique Dussel’s insistence that European progress and modernity was founded on the subordination and extermination of ‘the other’ that commenced with the Spanish conquest of the Americas in 1492 (Dussel, 1995), the US–Mexico ‘border’, as the most literal contemporary example of the colonial and neocolonial split between ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’, becomes illustrative for the ‘North–South’ focus of future international and intranational politics.

At present, the prevailing alternatives, as noted by Benjamin Barber, seem to be just ‘McWorld’ or ‘Jihad’: a consumer economy is engulfing the world (and widening the gap between ‘haves’ and ‘haves-not’) while simultaneously regional parochial cultures seek to petrify their identity, usually in a very rigid, undemocratic spirit (Barber, 1995). Either a homogenous objectification of human identity as a consumer or as a narrowly-scripted ethnic ensues. Waldron, Young, Bhabha, Elizondo, and Anzaldua, instead offer hopeful, open-ended examples which resist either temptation and instead move in-between assimilation v. separatism.

True, even if heterogeneity, not homogeneity, may be the more appropriate rendering of cultural identity, the objection will still be raised that indeed French Canadians, or the cultural antagonists in Bosnia, Cyprus, and Ulster, among other places, will still defend their cultural monism at all costs. So be it, but at what point is such steadfast cultural integrity actually a mask for racism or fascism? The prevalence of hegemonic cultures claiming to be homogeneous or universal is why the counter insights of cosmopolitanism, relational group theory, hybridity, and mestizaje have normative and not just empirical implications for democracy.

The shortcoming of Kymlicka’s cultural rights theory and Taylor/Walzer’s cultural recasting of federalism is simply that both insufficiently incorporate how integral heterogeneity is to cultural identity. If indeed the Americas are where the cultures of Africa, Asia, and Europe are most entwined, then mestizaje’s 500 year legacy of wrestling with both cultural mixing and the economic domination of ‘haves’ over ‘have-nots’ needs to be party to any discussion on how to realize a heterogeneous mutual democracy through a chiasma of cultures.
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