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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Metamestizaje and the narration of political movements from the south

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Abstract This article analyzes the use of the "Indian" in three Chicana texts involved in romantic couplings that point to what I term as a "mestizaje" naturalized in the Southwest that necessitates a "metamestizaje" reading. A naturalized mestizaje allows the writers to interpellate Indian characters or racialized others from the south into the larger Latino family. I argue that by doing so, the novelists unwittingly erase Indigenous autonomy, language, and cultural histories, privileging a US brand of mestizo identity popularized in political discourse and cultural productions. Indeed, I conclude that, ultimately, these novels are about Chicano and Latino disenfranchisement and not about solidarity and horizontal relationships with Indigenous communities in the south.

Keywords Indigeneity · Solidarity movements · Chicana novels · Metamestizaje · Central America · Chiapas

Space is a boundary marker of ethnoracial identity in Mexico. The South and the rural are coded as "Indian," whereas the North and the urban are coded as "Mexican."

—A. M. Alonso (2004, p. 469)

This essay offers an analysis of how political and social movements from Mexico and Central America are figured through the trope of the Indian in three Chicana novels. In particular, I focus on the fictionalized romances in Graciela Limón's *Erased Faces* (2001), Ana Castillo's *Sapogonia* (1994a), and Demetria Martinez's *Mother Tongue* (1997). Collectively, these novels' characters and their dramas take us beyond romantic racial relations set in the l980s and 1990s. Instead, I propose to show that *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* represent two vectors connecting to historical events (i.e., the encounter) and the political ideologies that prescribe the whitening

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of Indians and Blacks in Latin America (*mestizaje*). Simultaneously, the narratives speak to a US complexity of relations of migration, racial politics, language, and solidarity in the Global South that constitute what I am advancing as "metamestizaje."[1] Metamestizaje is the concept I propose to refer to the need to think beyond this racial discourse as always already at play in the Americas. I am also using it here to think through its difference between the United States and Latin America. In the context of this essay, I also deploy metamestizaje as a commentary on a commentary that readers need to interrogate as a given. It is not that these novels necessarily go beyond *mestizaje*, but rather that, in their attempts to transgress north/south, queer/straight, Chicano/Indigenous differences, they push the readers toward a metamestizaje. The novels' limitations force readers to contemplate and meditate on those differences. In resonance with Hayden White's *Metahistory* (1975), I see these novels as containing structural elements beyond the stories themselves; in our context, the elements are about uneven power relations in multiple axes (pp. 7–8). Relatedly, the function of *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* in these novels serves as a "metalanguage" discursivity. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham deploys "metalanguage" as a double discourse, "serving the voice of black oppression and the voice of black liberation" (1992, p. 267). In the novels, the explicit engagement with *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* works similarly—as both have served to articulate an antiracism struggle in the United States by Chicanos/Latinos, while at the same erasing Native American and Indigenous subjects. In Latin America, progressive intellectuals espoused *indigenismo* to shed light on the exploitation of Indigenous peoples by depicting them as perpetual victims.

In the novels, the use of *mestizaje* and indigenist discourses allows the authors to plot social and political conflicts with mixed results because they reflect a metalanguage discourse in the process. In appropriating Latin American *indigenismo*, these novels purport to challenge US Whiteness while perpetuating the dominant Latin American narrative of mixing that seeks to annihilate Indigenous peoples in Mesoamerica by absorption. Put differently, this essay argues that the novels serve as commentaries on a reified historical *mestizaje*—assuming cultural and racial mixture, as always already in situ in the Southwest, that does not need to account for Indigenous autonomy or national, linguistic, or cultural difference. Identity or political differences simply become absorbed through *mestizaje*. The novels, then, contribute to a metamestizaje, serving as commentaries built on commentaries of a historical mixing. In this sense, they reproduce what Diana Taylor terms "scenarios of discovery" that become "predictable, formulaic" (2003, p. 13).

These three novels turn to a racialized discourse—though not always using the same terms with which Taylor describes the participants (i.e., the White male and Brown subjects)—that writers deploy to restage the European encounter with Indigenous peoples in the Americas and ideas of racial mixing through romantic couplings. The writers under examination return to this event represented by the

[1] My thinking of metamestizaje is inspired by H. White's *Metahistory* (1975), F. Jameson's "Metacommentary" (1971), and E. Brooks-Higginbotham's "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race." (1992). I reference Claudia Milian's observation that the Global South "can speak to the negotiation of political identities—and the passages of political families—across borders, (2013, p. 34).

ultimate historical romance played by Cortés and La Malinche, but transpose it on to modern day romances—in which the couples involve heterosexual or homosexual unions and, most importantly, present the US mestizo as the character with agency. In engaging with the politics of the south, the novelists ascribe an identity to the protagonists that is predicated on an understanding of "Indianness" as a biological identity informed by North American theories about blood quantum and historical miscegenation. Writers subsequently map these ideas on to the characters of the south, reinforcing established racial notions implicit in a mixed-race discourse that allow the authors to interpellate Indigenous subjects into the stories without necessarily knowing their specific nation or language. The romantic couplings of mestizo and Indigenous characters in these novels metaphorically evoke the "mirror stage" in the Lacanian sense, but with the main difference that "the other" in the mirror is also involved in a struggle to assert his or her subjectivity in real life, and ultimately in the world of the stories. The romances fail precisely because it is the US mestizo identity that is privileged in the end of the novels; hence, *mestizaje* serves to deny Indigenous subjectivity. The main goal of this essay is to depict the complex racial, class, ethnic, and sexual relations that structure identities where a mestizo and Indigenous subjectivity may, in a US Chicano/Latino context, seem to operate in a horizontal continuum, while in other contexts, it operates in opposition.[2]

Political movements from both Chiapas, Mexico, and Central America coincide temporally and spatially, thus I analyze them together—even if scholars tend to treat them separately.[3] I find it productive to examine them together because, tellingly, they function in the novels in similar racialized terms. By emphasizing an Indian phenotype, these novels unwittingly advance a way of thinking of Mesoamerica as a particularly distinct region. In that regard, peoples in Mesoamerica share more commonalities than they do differences, because they ineluctably hail from less White, less urban, and less wealthy centers. However, in the novels, the rich multiplicity of languages and peoples in Mesoamerica becomes homogenized in favor of a generic Indianness.

This homogenization contrasts with how Indigenous intellectuals animate indigeneity based on the centrality of linguistic diversity, territories, and cultures. Strikingly, in these three novels, a Maya can stand in for a Kechua/Kichua and a Nahua for a Mixtec. While the tenets underpinning Indigenous identity claims may be problematized through the realities of immigration, displacement, or intercultural realities, they nonetheless form the basis of an articulated Indigenous difference in Latin America.

The authors deploy politics from the south to reenergize their own indigenist discourse, countering Anglo racism in the United States. The racial discourse reproduced in these texts is informed by a consumption of an Indian image removed from any Indigenous agency in Latin America. The marginalized economic and

[2] In the Yucatán Peninsula for instance, "mestizo" is used to refer to a Maya speaker.

[3] Interestingly when the Zapatistas erupted into national political scene, former president Ernesto Zedillo claimed the rebels were actually Central Americans. Of course, it must be noted that, historically, Chiapas was part of the Central American Confederacy before l823 (the date Central America separated from its two-year union with Mexico and the year Chiapas was incorporated into Mexico).

social status of Chicanos in the United States as mestizos allows them to assume and imagine a horizontal relationship with Indigenous peoples in the south and the north, which makes sense when considering the marginal subject position Chicanos/Latinos occupy in Anglo society. However, the hegemonic use of mestizos as ideal subjects in Latin American nationalist discourses gets deflected in these narratives. In Latin America, Indigenous scholars argue that to claim everyone is a mestiza/o or mixed undermines their experience of racism. Predictably, the love stories driving these narratives prove impossible, because it is the Chicano characters, through the relationship with the other from the south, who become empowered, while the Indigenous or the racialized other from the south disappears or dies in the narrative. In *Erased Faces*, Adriana begins her identity search in the Hopi Reservation, but it is in the south that she finally comes to terms with her identity. In Castillo's *Sapogonia,* Max Madrigal serves as Pastora's mirror, a Chicana from Chicago with Indigenous roots. While he is less interested in his Mayan roots, she embraces her Yaqui ancestor more intently. Nonetheless, once she becomes a full subject through her experience with the other from the south, Max fades away as a character at the end of the novel. In *Mother Tongue* the Indigenous other from the south, with his "Mayan cheekbones with hazel eyes," disappears after the Chicana protagonist also comes into her own as a woman and activist, hinting that he may be alive somewhere outside the United States (Maria receives a letter from Canada at the end of the novel). In all of the novels, the romances prove impossible, privileging the survival of the Latino/a characters that will continue the struggle.

Indigenist discourse in the Latin American context

Before turning to an analysis of the novels in question, in this section, I briefly discuss how *indigenismo* and *mestizaje*—now seen as moribund discourses in Latin America because of their contestation by Indigenous groups and other social sectors—figure historically. The Mexican historian and philosopher, Luis Villoro (1950) defines *indigenismo* as a set of theoretical concepts and processes that have manifested a concern with the Indian since Cortés's arrival. This concern with the Indian gives birth to the *indigenista* novel, a genre unique to Latin America.[4] Critics place Clorinda Matto de Turner's *Aves sin Nido*, first published in 1889, as its genesis. *Indigenista* novels, in general, attempted to represent oppressive conditions of the Indian but, ultimately, resolved racial conflicts through *mestizaje* or the biological mixing of characters. In her analysis of the Latin American romance novel, the critic Doris Sommer argues that nineteenth-century romances in Latin America functioned to mediate ethnic and class differences (Sommer 1991). Literary critic Cornejo Polar (1979) incisively comments that the writer of *indigenista* novels is alien to the language and cultural referent he or she tries to represent. Nonetheless, it is post the l910 Revolution in Mexico that the mestizo emerges as the paradigmatic national

[4] Of course, there are various tendencies under this umbrella term, but as it relates to literature, please see the work, *Hermenéutica y praxis del indigenismo: la novela indigenista desde Clorinda Matto a José María Arguedas* by Julio Rodríguez-Luis.

subject and the Indian as a subject/symbol relegated to the past (see Knight 1990; Taylor 2009; Lund 2012, among many others). *Indigenista* novels published after the 1940s differed from earlier ones in representing Indians as victims of a colonialist system and, instead, focused on the idea of saving them through integrationist education policies, mechanisms purportedly less coercive in their assimilationist goals. The fomentation of post-Revolutionary Mexican nationalism through Indigenous symbols deeply affected other Latin American countries with large Indigenous populations, specifically after the l940s meeting of the most important heads of nation-states in Pátzcuaro, Michoacán. This discourse was provocatively wielded by activists and manifested in popular culture across borders in Mesoamerica, where exalting a glorious Indigenous past seemed progressive even if it meant disassociating that past from contemporary Indigenous groups. Miller (2004) observes that, early in the twentieth century, *mestizaje* was "generally considered anti-racist, anti-imperial, and more inclusive of a greater portion of Latin America's diverse citizenry in political and cultural engagements than ever before" (p. 147). The problem that ensued with *mestizaje* discourse is when it was institutionalized as state policy, one that aimed to whiten the Indian, serving a double discourse that both negated and asserted difference.

Mestizaje in the US context

Chicano/as repurposed these discourses after the l960s as a way to dismantle colonialist legacies that positioned Indians as inferior to Europeans. While not all of Chicano literature deals directly with *mestizaje* and *indigenismo*, the idea of mixing, whether biological or cultural, is part and parcel of many foundational narratives emerging from the experience of multiple colonialisms. The use of the Indian as a trope in cultural and political discourse relates to the experience of Spanish and Anglo colonialisms as well as the subsequent attribute of resistance to Indian identitarian claims. Aztlán's mythical past became the main manifestation of *indigenismo* in the US, oftentimes titling creative works and critical anthologies. The Chicano movement echoes early twentieth-century Mexican discourses, making them foundational to cultural manifestos like "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán" in l969. The (re) appropriation of these discourses animated a different set of connotations, which were used as strategies against racist policies in an attempt to destabilize the dominant native/alien and immigrant/citizen binaries. At the same time, the resignification of *mestizaje* and the "cosmic race"—concepts that were first expounded on by the Mexican educator J. Vasconcelos in 1925—is a critical example of what Mignolo (2000) terms "the geopolitics of knowledge" and "colonial difference." Recognizing the context in which this discourse gains traction becomes important for understanding the emergence of these two historically and politically situated genealogies. Vasconcelos's "mestizaje" and "cosmic race" propositions originally set out to oppose the notion of racial purity prevalent in Europe and the United States—similar in spirit to the ways Chicanos deployed them in the late l960s and l970s. The critique of racial purity, however, stayed at the level of discourse because it neither affected racial inequity in Latin

America nor strengthened social movements, which arguably did occur in the United States. Although its deployment in the United States had a minimal effect on the racial attitudes limiting Chicano and Latino communities, it strengthened Chicano and Latino identity politics and began a decolonization process that has had important repercussions in the arts, music, literature, and racial relations. In Latin America, Indigenous and Afro-descendant movements critique Vasconcelos's *mestizaje* for the implicit racism in this discourse—that through racial mixing the Indian and Black populations would eventually disappear (Safa 2005).

One of the most notorious appropriations of Vasconcelos's text is Anzaldúa's canonical *Borderlands* (1987). Anzaldúa theorizes *mestizaje* as a site of plurality that privileges "difference." Like Vasconcelos's writing against the racial purity discourse of Europe and the United States, *Borderlands* cannot be understood without its geopolitics of knowledge. Saldaña-Portillo (2001), Contreras (2008), and Olguín (2013) critique Anzaldúa's erasure of Native American and other Indigenous nations in the south. In other Chicano/a and Latino/a cultural productions, references to a cosmic race and *mestizaje* served to articulate gender and sexuality differences. Chicana poets like La Chrisx (1993) recasts Vasconcelos's idea in her poem, "La Loca de la raza cósmica" as a response to "I am Joaquín," the emblematic poem of the Chicano Movement.[5] La Chrisx (1993) presents "la loca de la raza cósmica" as a tribute to women's empowerment, repurposing Vasconcelos to speak to gender issues. According to the poem, "*La loca de la raza cósmica"* is any Chicana who faces social and economic obstacles and struggles to survive. Adding yet another dimension to this appropriation are Cherrie Moraga's (1993) and Gil Cuadro's (1994) queer versions of Aztlán and *mestizaje*. Their works strengthen my argument about the need for a metamestizaje, because Indianness is tapped as part of a mestizo discourse that is read as radical difference—hence in resistance to heteronormative paradigms. Indigenismo and mestizaje in the Chicana/o context, then, become central to voicing a politics against racial, ethnic, sexual, and class assimilation. The cultural critic Pérez-Torres (2006) captures this elegantly when he writes that if "mestizaje in Mexico represents a flight from the Indian, we might think of Chicana mestizaje as a race towards the Indian" (p. 16). In contrast, Saldaña-Portillo (2001) and McCaughan (2000) critique the exoticism and erasure of Indigenous people in many of these canonical texts. Exoticizing and recuperating Indianness as a historical past in these works should be interrogated. And, yet, it is important to acknowledge that these texts articulated a new language with which to broach the pervasive racism, sexism, and homophobia in Chicano and Latino communities. Anzaldúa's text to a great extent exposed the entrenched racism in the larger Latino community, where racial attitudes about Indianness and Blackness abound. Indeed, through the problematic use of the Indian, these writers tried to name the continuous, colonialist and racial prejudice contemporary Indigenous communities endure. Anzaldúa's text represents the culmination of numerous metamestizaje discourses in which Indians in the north and south inevitably suffer erasure. The novels, Limón's *Erased Faces* (2001), Castillo's *Sapogonia* (1994a),

[5] Originally published in 1978, the poem is anthologized by Rebolledo y Rivero (1993) in *Infinite Divisions: Anthology of Chicana Literature* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press), 84–87.

and Martinez's *Mother Tongue* (1997)—a decidedly very different genre than Moraga's or Anzaldúa's theoretical work—appeal to a discourse of metamestizaje through the fictionalization of romantic couplings, whether these are hetero or same-sex in orientation.

Unequivocally, Mesoamerican politics from the south brings a particular savor to these texts, as they reinvigorate questions of indigeneity, indigenismo, borderlands, and mestizaje. Political movements from the south have transformed the US/Mexico focus to include Central American/Mexican borders and Central American/US borders as well as intra-regional borders within Mexico. The political struggles specifically in Chiapas, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua prompted what Moreiras (2001), in a different context, terms a "poetics of solidarity."[6] Saldivar-Hull (2000) terms some of these texts, especially by Chicana writers, as feminism on the border. These social movements inspired Chicano writers to create and imagine new spatial and racial geographies wherein these subjects can be incorporated into the larger Latino family through a metamestizaje. The new spatial and racial geographies represented in some Chicano texts fluctuate between an *indigenismo* that celebrates a generic Indianness while they assert Indigenous struggles in the south, and an extreme otherizing of the Indian in biological terms. In other words, as these writers grapple with questions of indigeneity from the south, they resort to a United States brand of *indigenismo* where they assume a horizontal line between Indigenous people and mestizos. The Indigenous characters become racialized explicitly in physiological terms (i.e., slits for eyes, braids, etc.). These novels, then, signal a shift toward a continental metamestizaje.

Who is the mestizo?

While dominant racial and cultural formation theories from the south have inexorably informed Chicano discourse, they have been deployed with different political aims. Many Chicana/o cultural producers responded to racial projects in the United States by embracing their Indigenous roots. Alberto (2012), Guidotti-Hernández (2011), Contreras (2008), Saldaña-Portillo (2001) and Sánchez (1997) have critically and productively written about the problematic of appropriating an abstracted indigeneity grounded in the past and divorced from its historical materialism. Nonetheless, I suggest these cultural discourses signify differently as they travel to the settler colonial United States and demonstrate how Indigenous and mestizo identities not only cannot be understood in biological terms and do not achieve horizontal relationships in either the north or south, but also, more critically, are not simply more of the same. In other words, geopolitical differences matter.

A mestizo or Ladino in Chiapas experiences a different cultural and political formation than a mestizo in the United States—a reality that goes beyond first/third

[6] Although Alberto Moreiras in *The Exhaustion of Difference* refers to the "poetics of solidarity" in the context of the *testimonio* and the limits of solidarity, since in and of itself the testimonist does not automatically offer access to the other's knowledge and runs the risk of being fetishized by Latin Americanist critics; in my mind, it resonates with the kind of absorption the others from the south undergo in these novels.

world dichotomies or national difference—and occupies a distinct position within the nation-state. Mestizos in the United States, on the other hand, are not seen as the ideal national subject, as mestizos are, for example—at least rhetorically—in Latin America. Indigenismo and *mestizaje*—as manifested in Latin America and the United States—represent two separate cultural and political genealogies, as is richly described in the introduction to *Comparative Indigeneities of the Americas* (Gutiérrez Nájera et al. 2012). In the novels examined here, I point out that the authors try to move beyond *indigenismo* and *mestizaje*, but are constrained by these discourses and their accompanying racialized trappings. My reading against the celebratory reception of these texts in their representation of the south through the Indian intends to point out that it is the US production of race and the way Chicanos experience it that structures how the characters are portrayed. While the cultural productions stand in solidarity with the politics in the south, they reproduce an unproblematic *mestizaje*, assuming it as a natural order of things in both the north and the south. In this way, the novelists discard specificities of territory, naming, and language.

While my essay dialogues with recent work that interrogates the *mestizaje* and indigenist aspects of Chicano discourse, it does not seek to indict and dismiss its deployment in the US in the same way that other scholars have done because they, in fact, represent two distinct genealogies. Institutionalized indigenist practices and the discourse of *mestizaje* in the nineteenth and early twentieth century had very different aims in Latin America. Nation-states passed legislation and funded programs that propitiated the acculturation and disappearance of Indigenous peoples. Indigenist policy, particularly after the 1940s, did not represent a thoughtless appropriation of cultural icons, but rather an aggressive deculturation program in place for Indigenous communities where Chiapas, for example, became its testing ground. While the indigenist aspects of Chicano discourse and its erasure of Native peoples from the US add another complexity to current debates around appropriation, sovereignty, and indigeneity (see Guidotti-Hernández 2011; Olguín 2013), my discussion focuses primarily on the representation of the Indigenous south, with some distinctions in the ways Indigenous populations from the south intersect with and depart from Chicano/Latino traditional racial discourses.

One of the challenges in critically discussing these novels has to do with their potential as celebrations of difference and transnational political feminist solidarity (see López-Calvo 2004; Blake 2012). The authors have at various points stood in solidarity with these political movements, too. Limón, for example, participated as a US delegate to observe protocol in the Salvadoran elections of l990. Martínez, too, stood in solidarity with the sanctuary movement and was even charged with conspiracy to smuggle undocumented Salvadorans into the United States by the federal government. Castillo has supported activism around the early sanctuary movement and denounced human rights abuses in Guatemala through her plays. Of the three writers, Castillo's critical text, *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma* (1994b), offers a prescriptive idea of Chicana feminism as a praxis that does not differentiate between indigeneity and *indigenismo*. Tellingly, she collapses *indigenismo* and indigeneity. She writes: "It is our task as Xicanistas, to not only reclaim our indigenismo—but also to reinsert the forsaken feminine into our

consciousness" (p. 12). In doing so, she supports assimilationist nation-state appropriations of how indigeneity may figure in cultural production when read from the south's perspective. This said, it raises the question of whether Castillo's brand of *indigenismo* does not share the same connotation and denotation that it does in Latin America. In grappling with their texts, my aim is not to question their political motivation as fiction, in the same trajectory as Central American studies scholar Ana Patricia Rodriguez's work does in her essay, "The Fiction of Solidarity (2008)," but rather I am interested in analyzing how these stories struggle with a metamestizaje where these subjects become Indianized regardless of their Indigenous specificities in relationship to land, language, and Indigenous nation and what are the historical and political forces driving the generic Indianness assumed in the stories.

The authors produced these novels to stand in solidarity with Chiapas and Central America, but as I demonstrate in the essay, the texts speak more to the social disenfranchisement of Chicanos and Latinos in the United States. The romances function as "mirror relationships" that ignore the historical tension between mestizos and Indigenous peoples in Mesoamerica, but also the Chicano/Native American difference; hence, the characters' coupling in erotic encounters fails precisely because the writers cannot engage with this difference, as their cultural and linguistic referents are distinctly different from the south they attempt to portray. In this sense, the authors resemble early twentieth-century *indigenista* writers in Latin America who wrote about Indigenous communities. This said, collectively, these novels offer other racial nuances that make them uniquely US narratives.

The modern rehearsal of conquest

The most salient strategy Limón, Castillo, and Martinez use to forge a "poetics of solidarity" (to borrow Moreiras's term again), I argue, is through a highly eroticized doubling or mirroring of characters. The romances stage a historical encounter, albeit in modern couplings, by evoking the most infamous mixed couplings of all—La Malinche and Cortés. Although in their staging these writers use different actors, all of them represent conquests (in the Spanish language a *conquista*, also has romantic and sexual connotations) that allude to the origination moment of biological mixing. The historical *conquista* and the immediate sexual conquest would be familiar to readers, projecting a metamestizaje based on the potential of these unions. I reference Jacques Lacan's "mirror stage" to think through the notion of subjectivity, but do so lightly, as I realize he was speaking about an individual's process during infancy. Lacan (1994) describes the mirror stage as one that humans experience as an external image of the body, which is what interests me—the external image of a body that is assumed as identity, which in the case of the novels, it is the other from the south. In Lacan's observations, this stage occurs during infancy, when a child discovers his reflection in the mirror and contributes to the conception of the "I." The ego, then, is dependent on that external "other" to establish his or her subjectivity. In the process, that other becomes what Lacan terms

an "imago," an ideal. In my reading of the novels, the authors deploy the Indian/mestizo characters as a way through which the Chicano/a characters will become whole, a subject, through the idealized other. The complexity ensuing from this literary strategy lies precisely in situating the Indigenous and mestizo characters as mirroring each other. The other in the mirror is not a reflection of the "I," as that other is also vying for subjectivity. Strikingly, the erotic encounters do not lead to happy marriages. The characters do not stay together in the conclusion of these novels, as one of the characters either dies or disappears. The erotic encounters serve as moments of recognition as well as experiences of the other that, in these novels, becomes necessary for the forging of the Chicano character's subjectivity. This mirroring technique allows a poetics of solidarity, but only to the point where the Chicano or Latino character becomes a subject and can discard the other from the south. This technique affords new diasporic subjects opportunities to be incorporated into the greater Latino family by assuming fraternal relations that obviate material and symbolic differences. Lacan writes that the mirror phase describes "the transformation which takes place in the subject when he assumes an image" (p. 94). In the following sections, the discussion turns to how the coupling of characters in *Erased Faces*, *Sapogonia*, and *Mother Tongue* works as a mirroring technique that invites readers toward a metamestizaje.

Erasing difference

Graciela Limón's novel, *Erased Faces* (2001), stands alone as an admirable attempt to render the complex condition of Indigenous women in Chiapas through fiction. Limón links the fight against racial oppression to women's struggle with issues of sexuality and personal autonomy. The protagonist Adriana is an orphan. Hers is a significant status because it allows her to be taken in or adopted, so to speak, by the Indigenous groups in Chiapas. As a Chicana who has lost her parents to domestic violence, Adriana embarks on a search for the self in a Hopi reservation at first. After reading an article about the Zapatistas in Chiapas, she decides to travel to Mexico and take photographs. Her narrative of discovery takes her from an indigenista approach in which the narrator is distant from the community to one of solidarity as she comes to terms with her participation in the struggle. At first, Adriana is intent on capturing, via photography, "what was left of the Mayan civilization, but once there, she realized that it was for living faces that she searched" (p. 5). Adriana's initial approach parallels not only indigenista writers in Latin America who sought to speak for and represent the Indian, but also anthropologists who strove to capture a type of native authenticity. She writes that the Maya women "knew why she dwelled among them, and they trusted her enough to allow her to take photographs of them as they toiled in the jungle or fished in the river" (p. 13). In the beginning of the story, Adriana is simply an outsider looking through her camera lens at the Indigenous community she visits. The introduction of the camera signifies a distance, a documentation of the other. Even though she clearly doesn't speak the language, by her own admission, she "liked the sound of their speaking because it echoed the sweet tones of bird songs filling the air" (p. 31).

Limón's description of Indigenous life in Chiapas echoes those *indigenista* novels that conflated nature with Indians.

As the narrative progresses, Adriana is haunted by dreams of persecution where she is the native woman. These dreams become more visceral when Capitana Juana, from the Tzeltal linguistic community, asks Adriana to join the rebels (Limón 2001, p. 39). This gesture awakens an erotic desire in our protagonist. The closer she gets to going native, the more her desire for Juana increases. After Juana invites Adriana to participate in the struggle, Adriana fixates on the Indigenous woman's breast: "It was only then that Adriana focused on that part of her body; *until that moment she had concentrated only on Juana's face*" (my emphasis, Limón 2001, p. 39). Anxieties about authenticity, indigeneity, and Chicano identity are worked through the text when Adriana retorts, "Why are you telling me this? I am not one of your people" (p. 39). Juana's response validates and authorizes Adriana's entrance into the Indigenous struggle. She reassures her entrance into a collective sense of belonging: "No, you are not, but soon you will be" (p. 38). Adriana's anxiety about her own position manifests when she agonizingly replies, "What good could I be to you? I am not native" (p. 39). The protagonist's poetics of solidarity, then, are fueled by an erotics of going native, made possible by *indigenismo* and a metamestizaje: "She felt a compelling attraction, a pull towards Juana she had never experienced for anyone" (p. 39). The romantic conquest in the novel presumes belonging through the mechanism of *mestizaje*. The readers learn that "Adriana without knowing it, much less admitting it, was above all seduced by Juana's image, by her voice, by her ideas" (p. 40). Adriana's political progression, from seeing Juana as an object to photograph to a subject, also fails because her commitment to the struggle still needs to be mediated by her first-world knowledge evinced in her reflection that "she had yearned to understand the reality behind the images she captured on film. How else could she do that, she asked herself, except to get as close as possible to her subjects" (p. 40). The use of the word "subjects" requires distance, one represented by her camera lens.

The protagonists' experience of gender and domestic violence allows them to mirror each other and consummate the relationship. Thus at the end, Adriana comes to terms with her sexual identity through Juana. Adriana's resolve to join the struggle also allows her to name her sexual desire for the first time in this scene: "Juana's image flashed in her mind, and behind it came a memory she had long before forgotten. She had made love with a man, but she had not felt then what she was feeling now for the small, indigenous woman" (p. 41). At the conclusion of the narrative, the Indigenous character, Juana, dies in the struggle. Nonetheless, the novel ends on the hopeful note that Adriana has found her identity and that she will be reunited with Juana in another life. The poetics of solidarity become problematic as Adriana becomes the interlocutor of the Indigenous struggle in the south in the north. Adriana, on her way to Los Angeles, reminisces: "She asked me to be the lips through which their silenced voices could speak" (p. 256). The fantasy of gaining authenticity by speaking for the other concludes the novel. Here the text treads a fine line between *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* as the narrator attempts to come to terms with her own US identity as well as with the agency of the Indigenous groups in Chiapas. The questions the novel elicits remain: Why does our protagonist leave the

struggle in the south? Why does the protagonist not stay in Chiapas to continue fighting? The fact that she leaves to become the mouthpiece of the struggle also begs another question: What are the limits of transnational solidarity?

Loving the *Sapogón*

Ana Castillo's novel, *Sapogonia* (1994a), presents the reader with a contrasting love story that engages an imagined and deterritorialized country baptized as Sapogonia. Max Madrigal and Pastora Aké's turbulent, intense, and violent sexual relationship serves as a backdrop to the unfolding of the narrative. Through these characters, the novel broaches solidarity politics, colonialism, civil war, *indigenismo* and ultimately *mestizaje*. Max belongs to a somewhat wealthy family in Sapogonia. Pastora is a working-class Chicana from the city of Chicago. The book's art cover and Mayan numerals adorning the pages visually and temporally collapse the Nahua and Mayan cultures together. In the opening scenes of the novel, Max originally leaves for France and Spain due to the political persecution students face at the university in Sapogonia. Once he travels to Paris and Barcelona, Max meets people who are in solidarity with his country. In the first chapters, we also learn that his father is a Spaniard who abandoned his pregnant mother to fend on her own. The metamestizaje elements of the novel reference another foundational text, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1963) by Octavio Paz. In this text, Paz sees the Indian mother as raped by the conquistador and names their offspring as "Los hijos de la chingada."[7] In Spain, Max decides to search for Pío Pico, his father, again referencing the search for origins (the European father, in Paz's text). Pico is ultimately the person who encourages him to leave for the United States and puts him in touch with a woman in New York who shelters him.

The novel offers a significant reversal and inversion of the character coupling in the previous novel, in so far as the character from the south is the mestizo, while the Chicana subject privileges her Yaqui genealogy. In *Sapogonia*, the Sapogón can be mixed-race, Hispanic, Latino, or Indian. Max Madrigal occupies a privileged position in *Sapogonia*. Readers learn that Max Madrigal's Spanish father abandoned his mother in an unnamed Central American country. As the story progresses, civil war disrupts the lives of his family, and his Mayan roots are revealed. Pastora mirrors Max; their relationship is a power struggle. In some respects, his attraction for Pastora Aké is reminiscent of a conquistador, and the novel continually references La Malinche and Cortés. Aké is a Mayan last name, another interesting transversal, since Max is the one with the Maya grandmother.

Torn by civil war, Sapogonia becomes a symbolic country that can stand in for any country in the Western Hemisphere. The civil war in the background makes allusion to an internal and metaphorical war within the mestizo (the *Sapogón*) as well as to the historical civil wars in 1980s Central America. Sapogonia functions as a new spatial geography where Indians and mestizos dwell, so that even if you are

[7] Of course, it is important to note that many Chicana feminists have critiqued Paz's condemnation of La Malinche or la Chingada (e.g., Norma Alarcón).

not from Sapogonia, you can still relate to Max Madrigal. As the prologue insists, Sapogonia is "a distinct place in the Americas where all mestizos reside, regardless of nationality, individual racial composition, or legal residential status—or, perhaps, because of all of these" (p. 1). *Indigenismo* and *mestizaje* enable the unproblematic absorption of the other into the already established Chicano/Latino community in Chicago. The narrative focuses mainly on the relationship between the protagonists. At the heart of the story is the Indigenous/European racial hybridity played by Max and Pastora in the United States. Pastora represents a politicized Chicana who puts herself in harm's way as she participates in the sanctuary movement organized to offer the people of Sapogonia a place of refuge while they escape the civil war. Despite the fact that Max and Pastora come from different nationalities, they mirror each other through *mestizaje*. Through their union—the novel implies—they reproduce an Indian subjectivity. In this context, *mestizaje* is animated again as biological. Through Max, Pastora becomes whole and vice versa. Pastora also serves a purpose for Max, as the situation brings him closer to the women in his country. In this way, the Sapogón—who we may safely imagine as being from Central America—and Pastora Aké become each other's mirror counterparts. Even though at the end of the novel, when they separate, the narrative suggests she may have carried his child. In the concluding sections of the novel, Pastora tells him, "The moment you and I acted like mating animals, that is when we submitted to our mortality. We're not here forever Máximo. And my son is not a continuation of you or me" (Castillo 1994a, p. 304). Similar to Limón's use of *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* as discursive mechanisms throughout the Americas, Castillo's project incorporates the Sapogón as a newcomer to Chicago. In this coupling, Max is Maya and Spanish and has a different cultural formation than Pastora. Interestingly, the novel uses Quechua and Maya subjects interchangeably. In one of their last conversations, Max tells Pastora that she is his femme fatale, his "mishu huarmi." Curiously those words are in the Quechua language, which translate into "mestiza woman." Max discloses to Pastora that the words are in his grandmother's tongue (who has been established as Maya). Miraculously Pastora understands the Indigenous language. While this may be a deliberate move by the writer, it conflates disparate Indigenous languages and geographies in the process of validating the discourse of *mestizaje*, which forces readers into a metamestizaje reading. Finally, it is through Max that Pastora comes into her own as an Indigenous Chicana, an activist, and finally as a mother.

The absence of a mother tongue

In a more concrete setting than Castillo's *Sapogonia*, Demetria Martinez's *Mother Tongue* (1997) relates another love story. The plot revolves around a Chicana activist named Maria who falls in love with the Salvadoran refugee. The novel's setting is in New Mexico. Maria, among other like-minded individuals, participates in the Sanctuary Movement. At her friend Soledad's request, María is charged with picking up José Luis from the airport. The moment she sees José Luis at the airport she falls in love. The first page of the narrative relays, "I knew I would one day

make love with him….A face with no borders: Tibetan eyelids, Spanish hazel iris, Mayan cheekbones dovetailing delicately as matchsticks" (p. 4). The Salvadoran refugee is immediately absorbed through the *mestizaje* underpinning the narrative.

Mother Tongue incorporates the refugee into the greater Latino family through the *mestizaje* already familiar to the main protagonist, Maria. In other words, this Indian or racialized subject from the south can be incorporated through *mestizaje* because the discourse allows the adding of different subjectivities. She feels infatuated by the Salvadoran refugee's physical Indianness. She writes: "With his Tibetan eyelids and Mayan cheekbones, Jose Luis looks like a god, an obsidian idol native people buried beneath Catholic shrines and revered under the noses of priests" (p. 102). In a pivotal scene of the novel, the reader sees that the racialized refugee, Jose Luis, functions as Maria's mirror: "Yes, from the very beginning I wanted him. In that time of my life, men *were mirrors that allowed me to see myself at different angles*" (my emphasis, p. 19). Prior to their romantic entanglement, Maria is inspired to buy a particular nail polish, "Aztec Red, 69" (p. 23). He made her feel alive and invigorated her sense of political commitment. She needed "someone to rescue [her] from an ordinary life" (p. 16). Indeed, his presence gets her out of her depression, and she learns to enjoy life again. After they consummate the relationship, in a post-traumatic stress episode, he lunges at her "like a jaguar." The assault also serves as a trigger for María to come to terms with her own trauma of childhood sexual abuse by a neighbor. After this violent episode, he putatively returns to El Salvador. She stays behind and carries his child. They biologically reproduce what María describes as an Olmec warrior. She describes her son as an "Olmec Indian face, wide and round and brown as cinnamon" (p. 143). She continues, "my baby grew up and became himself: Olmec with a warrior helmet, raging against me and the powers that had laid waste his earth" (p. l43). Martinez references the Maya, Olmec, and Mixtec to refer to the refugee, thereby homogenizing these histories, languages, and territories, and cultures, but also historical periods. A mention of the death squads gets transposed from its historical name, Atlacatl, to Mixtec Batallion. This transposition presumes an underlying homogeneity of two very different Indigenous languages and nations. Not to mention that the Mixtecs reside in Oaxaca and that El Salvador officially recognized only three Indigenous nations in 2015. The romance between Maria and the Mesoamerican "other" is needed in order for her to come to terms with her own US subjectivity. The "disappeared" in El Salvador are equated to Chicano/a and Latino/a invisibility in the news, but by using the verb "disappeared" in the US context, which glosses major and violent differences. The protagonist notes, "I said, because your skin is brown, what you say will be followed by words like Romero claimed. Whereas if you were white, it would read, Romero said. That is how they disappear people here. Reporters aim cameras at you like Uzis. They insert notebooks and microphones between themselves and your history" (p. 33). Similar to the fate of the others in the aforementioned texts, Jose Luis's character disappears or gets killed off in the narrative when Maria comes into her own as a woman and political activist.

The enduring use of *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* in these novels serves to seamlessly assume horizontal relationships with Indigenous peoples as newcomers

from the south as well as to overlook Native American nations. By invoking metamestizaje, I also see these novels pointing to the atavistic racial discourse we have inherited. My contention is that contemporary Indigenous migrations from Mesoamerica to the United States are already reconfiguring Chicano/Latino's understanding of the Indian beyond a phenotype. Since the l980s, Indigenous migration from the Mexican states of Oaxaca, Yucatan, and Chiapas, as well as Central American countries, has dramatically increased. Mixtec and Zapotec communities together now constitute the largest Indigenous group in California. They provoke serious questions as to how we consume and deploy Chicano and Latino discourses as informed by *indigenismo* and its ideological branch of *mestizaje*. What does it mean for Chicano and Latino discourse that creative writing workshops in Mixtec are now held in Fresno and Anaheim, California? And can we, as Saldaña-Portillo points out, go beyond our understanding of indigeneity in biological terms? Can we, to quote Saldaña-Portillo, "take seriously the Zapatista movement's critique of mestizaje and indigenismo as parallel ideologies that incorporate the figure of Indian in the consolidation of a nationalist identity in order to effectively exclude contemporary Indians" (p. 413). Can we assume our subjectivities without the imago, that is, an idealized other? Juan Felipe Herrera, in his prologue to a collection of poetry inspired by Chiapas, writes, "At the heart of the account is my internal struggle to become whole, to recollect myself as a member of a disinherited Indian and American family" (2000, p. 7). His reflection aptly points to the argument I have tried to establish throughout this essay, mainly, that these narratives are a way for the authors to grapple with social and political disenfranchisement in the United States but are not about the Indian in Latin America.

Indigeneity from the south to the United States

Contemporary literary and cultural productions by Indigenous writers in Latin America as well as by those Indigenous subjects who now live in the United States offer a different take on indigeneity. It is an identity that moves away from a biological discourse so trenchant in Chicano/a and Latin American discourses of race.[8] In contrast to the Chicano texts selected and their search for a place within the racial projects of the United States, Indigenous poets and cultural producers assert subjectivity against the discourses of *mestizaje* and *indigenismo*. Among the more established voices from Guatemala is Maya Cu (2005), an urban Q'eqchi' poet. She talks back to discourses that render her in classic Mayan iconography and writes in Spanish: [I am not/the feminine version/of a particular icon/Nor/the mythic personage/created in the imagination/of some poet/Neither am I/a postcard face/to sell to tourism/Let it be clear: I am not/an ancestral clay doll/revived by the divine breath/of postmodern intellectuals"(p. 35). In Fresno, California, Miguel Villegas (2012) raps in three languages: Mixtec, English, and Spanish. In one of his most

[8] I am not negating the real effects of being racialized as Indian, however.

popular songs, he shouts, "Mixteco is a language, not a dialect/now I am trilingual/you can't see me as less." This line speaks to the discrimination under which Indigenous people from Oaxaca suffer. In 2012, the Mixteco/Indigena Community Project launched a campaign to criminalize the use of "oaxaquita" in the Anaheim School District.[9] In yet another California example, Gabriela Spears-Rico (2011), a P'urepecha/Mazatlinteca, critiques the way the Zapatistas are romanticized. In "Eulogy for Ramona," Spears-Rico poses the question, "What will remain of the commander whose six words mobilized an entire nation never again a Mexico without us.…Will only her replicas remain/Zapatista dolls/faces hidden behind red bandannas and ski masks/rifles strapped across their breasts? Adorning Chicano altars/Or key chains hanging from backpacks?" (p. 207). K'iche' poet Francisco Icala, who migrated to San Francisco and who will probably never return to his homeland, writes nostalgically about Guatemala's flora and fauna in his unpublished poem, "Nan Ulew" (mother earth) in three languages. Movements from Indians in the south toward the United States transform the symbolic and abstract use of the Indian in Chicano and Latino discourse, allowing for other ways of standing and working in solidarity with Indigenous peoples. This said, those of us who are Indigenous Latinos or Indigenous migrants need to learn about the Native communities whose lands we live on and share our experiences. Although some individuals may see us as settlers of color, that status does not fully capture who we are and where we come from.

As an Indigenous immigrant in Los Angeles, I moved between urban Indians and Latin American immigrants in my youth.[10] This presumed sense of belonging gradually changed for me, starting in high school. Before the end of the school year, at the behest of my English teacher, I applied to a Christian-Jewish Summer Camp Fellowship for inner-city youth in my sophomore year. The camp leaders held an exercise that marked me in important ways. They asked everyone to line up in relationship to the power they perceived having in society. Everyone began to move; the White kids seemed to naturally gravitate to the front row, followed by Asians, African Americans, then Latinos and lastly Native Americans. At that exact moment I felt divided, but I began to move toward the group of Latinos I had previously met that day. In the midst of this chaos prompted by bodies moving, students screaming, crying, and someone gripping my hand, I stayed put … but I kept looking back to the Native American student group. Suddenly, they were no longer standing. Instead, the Native American students had sat down, formed a circle, and chanted as the tears came…. I wept along with them but from the row with the Latino student group. Being an Indigenous immigrant or Indigenous Latino represents a contradiction in terms. In my case, the Maya Ch'orti' constitute a very small community that lives in the fringes of three nation-states and whose members have different legal statuses as well depending on the nation-state, which I experienced because I spent part of my infancy moving among these three

[9] See "Epithet that divides Mexicans is banned by Oxnard School District," *Los Angeles Times*, 28 May 2012.

[10] I was part of the Native American student group in high school. There were five of us. The Indigenous nations represented were Diné, Cherokee, Tohono O'odham, and Chicana. Although my mother's side of the family identifies as *campesino*, my father's side of the family came from the *aldea*, Pie del Cerro, a land communally owned by Maya Ch'orti' Indians.

countries.[11] The Maya Ch'orti' represent a small community and have not migrated in large numbers to the United States. This is obviously so different for the Zapotec, Mixtec, Yukatek Maya, and Quiché Mayas in Los Angeles and other metropolitan centers. One of the main differences between natives in the United States and Indigenous migrants is, that in our attempt to "make it," we seek to be part of the system. In that regard, we differ from most Natives in the United States who refuse a cosmetic multicultural inclusion. My intellectual trajectory has led me to better understand the concept and practice of Native American autonomy and how it affects our relationship to this land.

On the other hand, practice of autonomy in the United States by Indigenous migrants or Indigenous Latinos is in the making and certainly looks different. Clearly, Indigenous Latinos challenge the foundations of Latino political discourse in two important ways. The discourse around bilingualism necessarily changes because Spanish has been used as a colonial imposition. Racism also acquires another dimension, since Indigenous peoples still experience discrimination in Latino communities, and as my essay demonstrates, mestizo voices are privileged in social movements in the United States involving Latino participation. Graciela Limón's *Erased Faces* (2001), Ana Castillo's *Sapogonia* (1994a), and Demetria Martinez's *Mother Tongue* (1997) are important novels to revisit precisely because they force us to think comparatively across nation-states, subjectivities, and languages. The novels foreground the limitations of *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* as they have evolved in the United States, thus requiring a metamestizaje critique. In effect, the texts open up challenging discussions around indigeneity, identity, migration, and north and south power differentials. The current political alliances built across and within Indigenous, Native American, and mestizo communities propels us toward a metamestizaje and a critique of tropes of conquest in order to build horizontal working relationships, as our everyday lives are not compartmentalized by disciplines or departments.

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[11] My family is from an area called el Trifinio, where Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala meet. In terms of nation-state citizenship, my father had roots in the *aldea*, Pie del Cerro, a border area shared by Guatemala and Honduras, whereas my mother has roots in La Palma, a border area between El Salvador and Honduras. I point out the border status because they are zones of both confluence and conflict, guided by nationalisms on all sides. Many people maintain double citizenship. Historically and culturally, this area is Maya Ch'orti' and their descendants are recognized by both the nation-states of Honduras and Guatemala. In 1932, the Ch'orti' were divided again by Guatemala and Honduras, making many families binational. In the Trifinio part of El Salvador, Indigenous peoples are not recognized as Ch'orti' because they do not have external cultural markers or speak Ch'orti', nor is there a collective identity outside the *campesino* one. Another issue is that the Indigenous peoples movement in El Salvador has been criticized for assuming a Maya identity when in fact the overwhelming majority is Nahuat and Lenca (see Tilley 2005). Not to mention that the nation-state of El Salvador officially acknowledged only three Indigenous nations in its constitution as recently as 2014. Brent E. Metz (2009) has conducted important contemporary work on the Maya Ch'orti' in the Trifinio area and speaks more to the differences.

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