

Multiculturalism in Canada: Steering Between the Charybdis of Uniformity and the Scylla of Cultural Fragmentation

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I: Imperial Drama

“Good walls make good neighbours; good neighbours make good walls,” the two spokesmen in Campton’s play, *Us and Them* (1985), assure each other. On the global stage, this is similar to the phrase ‘peaceful co-existence’ as employed during the cold war, first in the rhetoric of communist leaders and then Western statesmen. With the ever-present threat of the nuclear race and nuclear holocaust, the ideological and geo-political competition between Soviet and Western states, and the repression of difference within respective borders at the time, its use must be viewed with great irony. As must the idea that two or more groups can accept each other’s different cultural practices and codes without seeking to assimilate, repress or destroy one another, only if physically separated. Even then, as history and theatre attest, co-existence is hardly assured.

In the play, two different peoples discover a new world at the same time. They agree to share the riches of the bountiful land and they draw a line to divide the territory. But soon worries about the uncontrollable movement of chickens, cows and horses encourage them to build a high wall along their border. This act works on both sides to keep the unknown out, confine the unruly animal cultures within, and give territorial essence to the ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1983). Hence, in essence, two

nation-states are born. Eventually, mutual suspicion about the unseen, strange 'other' and fear that 'they' will attack and take away what is 'ours' forces both groups to spy on their neighbour. This only reinforces suspicions and increases labels and insults. The neighbour becomes 'evil', 'sinister' . . . Eventually, they tear down the wall and fight until their societies are in ruin. As the Recorder observes this battle, s/he concludes that in history neither side really wins, and once the mess is cleaned up "the ground is left clean and tidy—ready for someone else to fight over another time" (ibid.: 83).

This artistic analogy of inter-national struggle cautions well about the dark images and fear of the other that walls help invoke and about the futility of war. These are timeless themes. But might we not also ground this play in history and read it as a struggle between imperial powers: Spain, Portugal; France, England; America, the Soviet Union. Then is it really the war between combatants that destroys their empires? Or are they not competing to conquer and dominate a resilient third: difference, otherness? We had better ask our Recorder about many relations extraneous yet critical to the central conflict. For example, who resided on the land before the new colonizers came and laid claim and what was their history and culture? How did they respond to colonization, subjection, exploitation? And what part was played by the domesticated yet unruly animals, the beasts of burden of these new inhabitants, that had to be confined to carry out their labour? Were they willingly enslaved? Of these new inhabitants, as different from each other as from the natives, what social contracts, what forces, what discourses, controlled their relations? On a broader level, what were the historical connections—the material conditions; the patterns of trade and accumulation; the diplomatic relations; the ideologies and cultural linkages—that tied the two imperial powers, the natives 'without history' and the work animals together (Wolf, 1989). Finally, what local

and global resistance and pressures ended the domination of some oppressive imperial structures and transformed others?

Let's move back to the theatrical stage. After war has brought ruin, the survivors question what went wrong and conclude that the wall was not high enough, not strong enough. The Recorder is angered by their inability to see their folly and expresses tainted hope that someday, somewhere, someone will learn from the past. But who's history? Who's myth? Hadn't we better ask what role the recorder had in all this. Was s/he as neutral as presumed? The curtain descends. Does it signal a break between the colonial and post-colonial, the imperial and post-imperial, the modern and the post-modern? One violent and oppressive age ends and a next age of liberation begins as we deconstruct all categories and confinements. Or is it only another intermission between acts in an unfinished and entangled human drama of ruins built on top of ruins? Is the mess ever really cleaned up? Listen! We can hear both the decaying and collapsing of old social and cultural constructions and the hammering and building of new ones.

II: Social Fragmentation

Unfortunately, despite growing global connections and flows of tourists, commodities, finances, information, ideology and waste, among others currents, the social bonds between groups are not growing stronger (Featherstone, 1990; Appaduri, 1990). Many appear to be unraveling as old inflexible and despotic political confinements cave in or are shaken by uprisings around the globe as the Cold War beams and supports give way. Nation state borders are continually breached and governments frantically search for ways to keep strangers out and contain differences within. There are some examples of social integration but many more of fracturing and disintegration.¹ Indeed, many of the new social constructions erect cultural and political barriers

intent on separating 'us' from 'them', where group identity is not based on open membership and inclusion but rather limited association and exclusion. Such associations are increasingly based on physical or cultural similarity, 'irreducible differences' of, for example, blood, gender, skin colour, religious belief, language or history. While for some groups the main motivation for this exclusiveness can be attributed to a history of cultural repression, assimilation, imperialism and annihilation, for others it stems from a feared loss of political influence, material security, self identity and cultural heritage as social, political and economic conditions change.² With today's migrations and diaspora, new ethnic communities can also take objective form around re-discovered primordial or historical ties, whether or not encouraged or discouraged by official government policies and legislation.³ Then there are, of course, always political leaders, warlords and other opportunists who would magnify differences for increased economic and symbolic capital and political authority (Ignatieff, 1993).

In reality we find in many of the divisive social movements around the world a mixed motivation of self-definition and self-determination as well as 'heroic' excess. The first two desires may be seen as processes of political maturation, even if fermented in a climate of identity politics and bottled and sold in a cultural economy that promotes and plays on differences to sell commodities (Appaduri, 1990). Yet it is the ambers of excess, stoked by fear mongers and global political-economic instabilities, that lead on the extreme end of the scale, to genocide, attacks on asylum hostels, the destruction of religious building and racially motivated police beatings and torture.⁴ Institutionalized discrimination in immigration policies and citizenship laws, in refugee hearings and in court decisions, everyday prejudice in job and housing placements, stereotyping of 'otherness' in the media, and the divisive rhetoric of politicians, though less obvious, are even more perva-

sive and persuasive forms of discrimination. These feed off of emotions, public ideas about others and structured distinctions that are woven into a person's own identity, sense of belonging and emotional security. Too, they feed off of a will to excess and even domination.

Easy 'cultural' explanations found in the mainstream media for the growing incidents of ethnic nationalism, religious fundamentalism, racisms, homophobia, and other hate crimes are insufficient. Cultural, racial, ethnic, gender and other differences continue to create new walls between us because they have material and political motivations and consequences and are imbued with social as well as symbolic and psychological significance. This makes understanding the play of difference much harder. One response is to erradicate difference through uniformity. Universal approaches to doing, knowing and being, though, can never work in the long run; a persisting history of resistance to forced assimilation and repression shows that we can't ignore differences. But multiple strategies used to objectify and legitimize them in order to control, exploit or exclude people are equally unacceptable. We need to question social and cultural categories that homogenize people and obscure other aspect of self and the struggles for control of symbolic and material resources. Although, we should take the significance such categories hold for people seriously, unlike cosmopolitan liberals, who would imagine we could progress beyond ethnic identity, or orthodox Marxists, who would reduce all real differences to those arising out of inequitable relations of production and distribution. On the other hand, ethnic nationalist or religious fundamentalist resistance movements that promote division and exclusion instead of liberty and inclusion, or the free-floating subjectivity that a deconstructionist approach can lead to also seem untenable in the long run if the world is not to violently fracture along ethnic, racial and other social rifts.

The challenge is how to steer through the troubled waters

between the Charybdis of uniformity and the Scylla of social fragmentation. As Octavio Paz warns, “The ideal of a single civilization for everyone, implicit in the cult of progress of technique, impoverishes and mutilates us. Every view of the world that becomes extinct, every culture that disappears, diminishes a possibility” (quoted in Tully, 1995: 186). But, equally, the belief in absolute and impervious difference and otherness, evident in the cult of modernist identity politics, divides, isolates and confuses us. Every view of the world that is circumscribed, every cultural mode that is bounded, objectified and essentialized diminishes interaction, communication and possibility. Do we only have the choice to be the same or unknowably different, to be a uniformed us or an impenetrable them? If not, what kind of socio-political philosophies will allow people to live together, with their variable differences, yet without them leading to epic hatred and violence at a time of ever greater social and cultural mixing? Can liberal, nationalist, communitarian or Marxist philosophies be bent to accommodate the demands for cultural diversity or, as opponents argue, are the inspired modes of association incapable of fully recognizing other forms of doing, knowing and being?

Moreover, in a world where the ‘foreign stranger’ is now quite possibly a neighbour and the culturally similar neighbour a stranger, and where people and neighbourhoods are increasingly linked and impacted in harmful ways by the creative-destructive forces of capitalism, we need to address serious questions about our ability not only to coexist peacefully but to unify in struggles for greater control over the forces that impact our lives, struggles which go beyond a single aspect of our identity. Are there not global and local issues that affect daily life which cross social boundaries and provide paths to a meeting place where mutual concerns can be discussed and bridges to understanding built?

Below I will take up these questions in a general way. To do so I will look more closely at some of the cultural and social

landscaping that is occurring at present in Canada, and particularly at the battle over the concept, policy and practice of multiculturalism.⁵ I have chosen Canada in part because it provides me with my confused national identity. More importantly, Canada, as a child of imperialism and colonialism, contains all the historical and geographical confusion and cultural entanglements brought about by the great migrations of pre-history and the early modern period, the mass immigrations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the commingling of refugees, legal and illegal immigrants, guest workers, visiting students, traders, tourists and others in the later half of this century.

Canadian society, often held up internationally as a model of cultural and ethnic diversity and tolerance is now being pulled apart by the deepening of social divisions, especially along ethnic, cultural and regional lines. The recent referendum in Quebec produced a razor-edged victory for pro-unity forces but the nationalist movement has pledged to continue towards sovereignty. Native groups are working harder than ever for greater constitutional recognition, self-government and the return of their ancestral lands. Members of older and more recent non-charter ethnic groups also wish to be recognized in their own right and have a greater role in the affairs and reconstitution of the nation. In so doing, they must assert their group's identity to counter multiple forms of discrimination. English Canada's unity, too, looks to sunder under the force of competing symbolic orders, especially the commercial cosmopolitanism broadcast from south of the border (Ayres, 1995). In such cultural drift, regional and national affiliation and identity re-emerges as an alluring homing beacon. In terms of material resources, the gap between the rich and poor continues to grow with minority women most susceptible to economic exploitation. It is in this complex environment that the politics of culture and identity, energized in what Appaduri has called the global cultural economy, creates more fierce

arenas for symbolic as well as sometimes life and death struggles over political and territorial control, the material basis for social reproduction, group definition, and cultural preservation. Multiculturalism, as a concept and policy, is central to this debate and struggle. It has been an important part of the Canadian social agenda for twenty five years, yet today it is increasingly being blamed by disparate groups for much of Canada's social discord as it becomes harder to imagine 'Canada'. These criticisms will be looked at and the question of whether multiculturalism policy is now threatening social cohesion will be addressed.

III: Multiculturalism

In Canada, nation building has always been a fragile process, balancing the need for a varying supply of cheap and skilled labour as economic conditions warranted with the maintenance of social control and the forging of a national identity. From Dominion in 1867 up until the end of WW2, the guiding principle of cultural policy was assimilation or subordination to British cultural traditions, values and norms. However, as in Britain, the identity of the imagined community was dependent on the production of a foreign other, who could not be assimilated (Cohen, 1994). This thinking, expressed in official, academic and popular discourses, in unison with policies and laws at various levels of government helped maintain an open ideology and practice of repression, exclusion and exploitation based on differences, especially those attributed to race (Anderson, 1991). This process of endowing physical differences with social significance within a capitalist mode of social organization and production has been referred to by Miles as racialization (Solomos & Back, 1994).

Once prejudicial ways of thinking about different others were objectified and naturalized in language, in media stereotypes, in academic writing, in government policies and laws and once they took form in workplace relations and the built environment, the

image was more easily reaffirmed and influenced the thinking of future generations as well as the social conditions of those subjected. The 'chinaman', given a lower wage than other workers, forced to live in squalid conditions and denied citizenship and government services in fact was poor and, sometimes, 'filthy'. Native peoples forced onto reservations and stripped of their guiding cultural compasses fell prey to the lure of whiskey and fulfilled the stereotype of the 'drunken, lazy Indian'. Those in repressed and excluded groups came to see themselves through the lens of the Western portrayer and have had to struggle not only to improve their economic and political positions in society but to create a positive self-image by combining old and new symbols and stories (Fanon, 1961; Anderson, 1991; Soja & Hooper, 1993) The history of this struggle is only now being told (Said, 1993).

The postwar years saw an increase in counter-discourses and opposition to policies of exclusion, especially from liberal humanism. After the horrors of the death camps and Nuremberg Trials, an increasing concern for human rights began to cast light on many racially based inequalities and notions of racial superiority (Kobayashi, 1993). The term 'race' came to have negative implications and 'ethnic' gained currency in government and academic writing, even though it, like the term race, still often implied physical as well as cultural differences (Berry & Laponce, 1994: 5). Still, in immigration policy, Canada continued to assess applicants on the basis of racial and national origin up until the 1960s, privileging people from Britain and France and other parts of Northwestern Europe (Frideres, 1992). It was not until 1947 that the exclusionary Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 was repealed and those people already naturalized allowed to vote, though other policies of exclusion persisted (Anderson, 1992). Not until twenty years after the war, with the Immigration Act of 1967, were all racial exclusions removed and a merit system established

which awarded points on the basis of nine criteria, including education, employability, financial capability, and family relations.

By the late sixties, Canada was becoming even more ethnically mixed as the new immigration acts opened the door to non-European peoples, in part to secure a new source of cheap labour (Stafford, 1992).⁶ Scholarly studies on ethnic communities became fashionable and helped reaffirm the social and cultural legitimacy of non-chartered peoples. What Soja & Hooper (1993: 185) have called 'modernist identity politics' were shifting away from class based movements to ethnic, ethnic nationalist and gender based ones. Like it or not, Canada was slowly moving from a unicultural society to that of a pluralistic one, demographically and symbolically. For the government the problem once again was how to build national unity and how to maintain order, especially in view of the race-riot problems that were occurring in the U.S. and the growing nationalist sentiment in Quebec (Elliott and Fleras, 1990). Multiculturalism became the symbolic keyword of a prescriptive philosophy of civil inclusiveness for a culturally diverse society, and it fit with the 'mosaic' (as opposed to the U.S. 'melting-pot') image that was emerging in Canada at the time.

Officially, multiculturalism was born in a policy speech by then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in 1971. It was the culmination of many changes in society since WW2 and especially in the 1960s. These changes were challenging the notion of Canada as a country based mainly on British cultural traditions. The 'Quiet Revolution' in Quebec had encourage the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963, which was to recommend ways to address the inequitable position of French Canadians in society. Bi-cultural assumptions of the Commission were challenged by Canadians from non-British, non-French backgrounds, who had gained political maturity, for example, Ukrainian and Jewish Canadians.⁷ These groups also called for greater recogni-

tion. So, in the end, the 1969 report of the Commission included *Volume IV, The Cultural Contributions of Other Ethnic Groups*.

The Official Languages Act of 1969 was to appease Quebec nationalists and yet the policy of multiculturalism rejected the idea of Canada as a bi-cultural society (Paquet, 1994). Stated Trudeau, "there cannot be one cultural policy for Canadians of British and French origin, another for the original peoples and yet a third for all others . . . A policy of multiculturalism must be a policy for all Canadians" (Canada, 1971). Yet, in fact, a policy for others was what his government was creating, knowingly or not. This is one of the persisting criticisms by supporters of multiculturalism, that it has not touched all areas of society. After twenty five years, it still mainly applies to immigrants, and the concept of multiculturalism today, as Karim suggests, "is increasingly being marginalized to mean only 'the others'" (1993: 190). The subsuming of the federal Department of Multiculturalism under the new Department of Heritage in 1993 is a further indication of this trend. Karim goes on to point out that despite the introduction of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988, the mainstream institutions of society, such as government and the media, have not become multicultural since people from various ethnic backgrounds are still underrepresented (*ibid.*: 198).⁸ Also, in dominant and populist discourses the term *multicultural*, like ethnic, is consistently used to designate Canadian others (*ibid.*: 198). Furthermore, Karim notes, in Quebec there are still many references to biculturalism in the media, and 'visible minorities' who speak French are classified as 'les allophones, not 'les francophones' (*ibid.*: 196-197). These observations suggest that many of the discourses of multiculturalism continue to do what racial discourses did previously, even if dressed up in less offensive terms: to define who is and who is not and to deny full participation in society to those designated as others.

The policy also emphasizes the importance of fostering at

once individual identity and liberty, ethnic identity, belonging and heritage and national identity and unity. The rationale in the original policy statement was that because of the depersonalization and homogenization of mass society, people should be encouraged to keep their ethnic traditions and heritage, yet still retain their individual rights and together build a strong Canadian national community. Cultural pluralism was seen as 'the very essence of Canadian identity' (Canada, 1971). In government rhetoric this all may sound possible, but in reality balancing the conflicting concerns of the individual, the ethnic group and the Canadian nation is far more difficult. How does a society protect the rights and freedoms of the individual when they go against the traditions important to the identity of various ethnic groups? Whose symbols, traditions and history should be used to build a Canadian identity that can foster attachment? How can a Canadian national identity be created and sustained when national groups within seek greater self-determination and even sovereignty and when the government is increasingly unable to control global flows? Finally, how can civic nationalism, based on the idea of a legal citizenship contract, compete with the strong feelings of belonging offered by ethnic nationalist association and blood ties, especially at a time of economic instability and high unemployment?

While conservative liberalism argues against cultural recognition (Tully, 1995), liberal humanism can and does accommodate the rights of groups and their collective goals as long as the liberty and fundamental rights of the individual are protected and as long as all groups are treated equally under the law (Carens, 1992). Kymlicka (1992) even argues that some groups be granted extra rights and resources to protect their cultural ways. But this may not be sufficient for groups that fear for the future of their cultural practices and codes, especially when they have previously been repressed under a liberal philosophy and constitution, as

was the case of many native groups and French Canadians under British political and cultural rule. In that multiculturalism gives rise to the politics of distinction, it does not find favour with liberals, who see their mode of doing, knowing and being as universal not particular. Still, while liberals may talk of equality, they are just as likely to reaffirm the officially constructed categories of cultural identity that help differentiate and rank people. Writes Anderson, "If the rise of liberalism did raise the concern for racial equality, it did not lead to a questioning of the widely held essentialist notion of racial distinctiveness" (1991: 176). Racial and ethnic categories are seen as natural and unproblematic rather than historically constructed and contested. Concern then is given for creating harmonious 'race relations' rather than addressing how the ideology of physical difference perpetuates racisms and inequities (Kobayashi, 1993; Solomos & Back, 1994).

The philosophy of civic nationalism, a nation state based liberalism, can not accept a policy of multiculturalism that promotes ethnic belonging and identity above membership and attachment to the civic community, which is open to all members of the nation who follow the rule of law. Argues Bissoondath, "The psychology and politics of multiculturalism have made divisiveness in the name of racial and ethnic rights socially acceptable" (1994: 185). Since the government policy creates and maintains ethnic divisions, he calls for its end or at least removal from the political arena. But unlike some, Bissoondath does not seek to protect traditions for the sake of tradition, which he feels multiculturalism does by turning culture as process into culture as commodity. Rather, he is in favour of tolerant integration into 'a new vision of Canadianness' (ibid.: 224) that blends Canada's cultural variations and ethnic backgrounds. His emphasis on building unity through cultural mixing rather than alienation, on establishing a 'nation of cultural hybrids' is attractive when one

realizes that in fact Canada is just that (ibid.: 224). But Bissoondath, despite mention of the hidden agenda of a racially intolerant Right, avoids a discussion of relation of power that could easily turn integration once again into forced assimilation and exclusion. His suggestion to remove 'culture and ethnicity from the manipulative realm of public policy and return it to individuals and their families' (ibid.: 219) also follows a humanistic ideal that grants more power to the individual than is warranted when one considers the extent to which family and social life has come under the 'manipulative realm' of private corporate interests.

Bissoondath correctly reacts against the hegemonic side of multiculturalism, which works through knowledge systems manipulated by the state to produce divisions and control differences. But as a public policy and an active site in the construction of public ideas, multiculturalism has been used, if not always successfully, to challenge dominant representations of otherness and structures of power and to sketch new images of the social body. It is this challenge that those on the Right fear when they call for the end to multiculturalism and a return to promoting Canadian heritage. Finally, it is unclear how Bissoondath's brand of civic nationalism would address the need at present for ethnic identity and belonging that Ignatieff (1993) finds is so profound, not just in Canada but in many places in the world.

For ethnic nationalists, cultural survival requires that they become 'masters in their own houses', to echo Ignatieff (ibid.). The problem in today's world is that most of these residences have long been shared and the relationships within intertwined. As boundaries firm in the struggle for self-determination and independence, smaller groups come to fear what their place would be in a nation newly formed by an ethnically defined majority, despite claims by some nationalists that other cultural practices will be recognized. Talk of civic liberties can not calm concern that the privileges of citizenship will be based on ethnic member-

ship. This fear is behind the Cree people's emergence as a political collective and their demand for independence from a would be sovereign Quebec. It is also behind the voiced concerns of immigrants in Quebec about language rights. Multiculturalism, though, is seen by Quebec nationalists as a challenge to their minimum demand for a 'distinct society' clause entrenched in the constitution. They feel multicultural legislation puts their claims on par with other ethnic groups that have less historical entitlement.

Some communitarians seek a middle way between liberalism and ethnic nationalism, and defend multiculturalism as a more realistic political philosophy for today's global cultural mix. Taylor argues that cultural survival is a legitimate goal that should at times supersede the rule of uniform treatment or cultural neutrality under liberalism (1994). Furthermore, he suggests that long-standing cultures deserve the presumption of equal worth. He comes to this understanding by viewing social life as 'dialogical' rather than monological. Writes Taylor, "my discovering my own identity doesn't mean that I work it out in isolation, but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others." (ibid.: 34). This shifts authenticity from self to social realization, and once historically assumed social categories can no longer be taken for granted, it give rise to an acknowledgment of everyone's need to be recognized. It also makes possible the claim of mis-recognition or non-recognition as a serious harm inflicted by one person or group on another, which leads to the politics of equal dignity and of difference. "With the politics of equal dignity, what is established is meant to be universally the same, an identical basket of rights and immunities; with the politics of difference, what we are asked to recognize is the unique identity of this individual or group, their distinctness from everyone else" (ibid.: 38). These two views appear at odds unless liberalism is not seen as culturally neutral but a particular form of social organization. Then forcefully

assimilating others to this form or marginalizing them would deny them equal dignity; that is, the equal status or worthiness of their traditions and culture. Liberalism, thus, shouldn't be assumed as a universal philosophy or imposed but must be a fighting creed.

Though Taylor outlines how individual identities are socially constructed, he only assumes as much for collective identity, without explaining the process. He does suggest that transformation of one's values can occur from a study of the other, but there is a stronger sense in Taylor's writing that a cultural identity, like an individual one, has an authentic if not an essential quality that takes solid form through history. Appiah notes that Taylor seems to accept the distinctiveness of the cultural identities that now claim our attention (*ibid.*: 156). So in the end, Taylor's politics of recognition follows other discourses on multiculturalism in viewing culture in static and bounded terms as the heritage and traditions of a people, rather than as a dynamic process central to social formation and change. Also, without considering the way cultural identity is re-presented and constructed in the global cultural economy, where tradition becomes kitsch and 'ethnic' festivals and icons serve as commodities for tourist consumption and media imaging, Taylor's writing hints of nostalgia for a more stable, less disruptive, world. Finally, though Taylor mentions the power colonizers had to impose "their image of the colonized on subjugated people," (*ibid.*: 65) in general he avoids all discussion of power relationships. How he would address the growing power of transnational corporation over the technologies and media reshaping the symbolic, social and physical landscapes is left to be seen. Perhaps his answer, echoing that found in the original policy statement on multiculturalism, is to promote the protection of traditions and heritage. As Harvey notes, this emphasis on national or cultural heritage is a common tendency running through postmodernist thinking at this turbulent time of capital

restructuring (1989).

But heritage multiculturalism, while appealing to tourist companies and those nostalgic for the traditions of a lost homeland or for roots in a time of social transition, has never been sufficient for groups seeking greater structural change in the face of disruptive socio-economic conditions. This has been one of the important lessons of Canadian multiculturalism. As Lewycky explains, "New definitions were shaped by new historical contexts. The influx of visible minority immigration into Canada provided a new demographic and, given the fact of universal suffrage, a new political context for the report *Equality Now!*" (1992: 378).⁹ This report marked a brief watershed point in the ideological battle fought through official multiculturalism, which emerged as a site of convergence for a rainbow coalition demanding social change. Ethnocultural groups, fighting through an umbrella organization, the Canadian Ethnocultural Council (CEC), pushed the federal government to address discriminations and inequities that cut across class, gender and ethnic lines. In particular, they argued for stronger rights legislation and involvement on such issues as employment equity, immigration, justice, the penal system, trade, media, government appointments and health and welfare (Kobayashi, 1993). Directly fighting racism also became a priority, and the Race Relations Directorate (later Race Relations Foundation) has played an active role in trying to reduce discrimination through education and awareness training, if not actually in deconstructing the concept and categories of race (*ibid.*).

Even though, as Kallen explains, human rights laws entrenched in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms provide an important means to fight individual, collective and, some argue, national discrimination, rights legislation alone has not been able to counter institutional and political economic forces restricting social change (1990). Writes Kallen, "constitutional amendments

entrench a hierarchy of ethnic and non-ethnic minority rights in Canada” (1990, 77). In particular, they reaffirm the dominant cultural status of the two charter groups, English and French Canada, by protecting their collective language and education rights. Writes Kallen:

Conversely, there are no parallel protections for the collective linguistic and religious rights of multicultural or aboriginal minorities. Charter s.27 mentions the ‘multicultural heritage’ of Canadians, but the vagueness of this provision leaves its interpretation entirely in the hands of the courts. Certainly s.27 affords no positive protections for minority rights, as this provision neither specifies nor defines the nature of the rights alluded to. Similarly, Charter s.22 provides only a vague, negative protection for non-official language minorities by allowing their linguistic rights but neither specifying nor defining them (ibid.: 88).

With little protection other than vague statements in the Charter, which are difficult to interpret and apply, minority groups have been forced to battle through the courts or with direct and vocal political action. Such direct action may be a more effective means than depending on biased ‘universal’ legislation and adjudication. Although gains have been made by minorities, as Stasiulis states, “these are constantly checked by the power and autonomy of capital and central state authorities” (1990: 275). Stafford offers an example:

At the same time that the Canadian state is allowing more immigrants into the country, it is adopting policies that make it more difficult for immigrants to obtain work and to utilize support services. The upshot of these trends is the establishment of a permanent underclass of visible minorities concentrated in the major cities in Canada (1992: 90).

Also, amendments proposed in the 1987 Meech Lake Accord and the 1993 Charlottetown constitutional talks would have strength-

ened the status of the two charter groups vis-à-vis minority groups and were, therefore, opposed by ethnic associations. The recent emphasis by the federal government on promoting Canadian heritage, as mentioned above, and the stricter conditions placed on funding for ethnocultural groups signal that the politics of difference played out through official multiculturalism may become an even more competitive and divisive arena. This will bring further calls for its abandonment. But the policy and politics of multicultural is still seen to provide one of the few avenues for 'other Canadians' to pursue social change, even if because of government funding requirements and political expediency agents must mobilize around a problematic ethnic or racial identity that, as Satzewich notes, doesn't preclude class exploitation and domination by people with a similar ethnic background (1992).

Marxist philosophy responds directly to structural inequalities arising from relations of production and distribution, and like liberalism, it has been pushed to account for persistent differences, in its case those non-class-derived. Traditional Marxists would explain racism or ethnicism as functional to capitalism's need to divide workers and create a cheaper source of labour (Li, 1990). Racism among labourers is seen as a 'false consciousness' encourage by the state to divide the proletariat class and inhibit class-based social movements. Multiculturalism is viewed as part of a strategy by the state to assist the private accumulation of wealth by creating a false belief in ethnic membership and ethnic equality, thus hiding wage-labour inequality and limiting class consciousness and mobilization (Lewycky, 1992).

Since some cases of racism can not be accounted for by a 'structuralist' approach, political economists, following Gramsci's theories on hegemony, have come to take an 'agency' approach. Writes Satzewich in reviewing Stuart Hall's ideas "Racism is not

a homogeneous ideology that has been imposed by capitalist 'from above' on groups of people in order to achieve certain predefined ends, but rather is a form of ideological representation that has emerged 'from below'. Racism is one of the ways in which people attempt to make sense of their lived experiences, to interpret and to explain the world" (1992: 258). The question that must be asked is not why the contradictions of capitalism lead to racism but how and why they "are experienced and defined by some classes at certain historical conjunctures in terms of 'race' ... (ibid.: 258). Detailed historical analysis is therefore required to understand the various racisms in the world. Though less economically deterministic and class reductionist, this approach still looks to the economic sphere to explain racist practices, though it does grant race 'relative autonomy' while still trying to avoid the reification and naturalization of race (Stasiulis, 1992).

This school of thought has not clearly articulated a position on multiculturalism in Canada, though Lewycky argues it should be viewed as a site of ideological struggle and resistance, not simply a state imposed ideology. Though it may be at first an ideology imposed by the ruling class, it must congrue with the daily experiences of ethnic and racial groups, it must have explanatory significance and be open to alternative articulations, if it is not to be opposed outright (1992: 386). Lewycky's approach is to analyze the discourses of the various players within the political process and the development of the bureaucratic infrastructure to see how the policy of multiculturalism and Canadian society has been transformed (ibid.: 388). While she acknowledges the influence of economic conditions on multiculturalism, she does not attempt to link these to the discourses of multiculturalism or to the changing players in the political process, nor does she examine how the political process, the discourses and the policy of multiculturalism affect group formation and identity or influence

hierarchies of difference. Still, this is an important area of inquiry.

New Left thinkers and practitioners have argued that modes of subjectivity other than class may have a greater and even overriding influence on daily experience, knowledge and the formation of self. Categories of cultural consciousness such as ethnicity, race, colonial status, nationality, gender and sexuality may greatly determine one's identity and where and how one is differently situated in relations of power. The experience of this 'situatedness' can provide the impetus for a politics of resistance to dominant and imposed ways of doing, knowing and being (Soja & Hooper, 1993). One of the problems this 'modernist identity politics' has is in universalizing one aspect of subjectivity or privileging "one or another set of agents in the process of radical social transformation (ibid.: 186). Further, argue Soja and Hooper:

the deeply ingrained essentialisms of modernist identity politics have tended to create a competitive exclusivity that resists, even rejects, seeing a 'real' world populated by multiple subjects with many (often changeable) identities located in varying (and also changeable) subject positions. Hence, modernist identity politics, in its fear and rejection of a fragmented reality, has often tended to create and intensify political divisiveness rather than working toward a multiple, pluralized, and yet still radical conceptualization of agency and identity (187).

Within official multiculturalism, such a politics has only helped reinforce the reifying and naturalizing tendencies of humanistic social science and social management, rather than challenge them, even if the intent was to assert a positive self-image in order to resist oppression.

Another concern about essentialist conceptions of a constructed category, such as 'minority women', is that they will restrict an analysis of more specific circumstances of racism. In

Canada, for example, to understand the type of racism experienced by a wealthy Asian immigrant or an Indochina refugee would require an examination of the connections among many modes of experience—gender, race and class (Stasiulis, 1992).

Challenges to homogenized and essentialized categories of difference taken too far, on the other hand, can lead to ultimate otherness. Social and cultural categories totally deconstructed would leave us totally isolated as biographical beings, suggests Harvey. This is what he calls ‘vulgar situatedness’ (1993: 57). With this line of thinking, since no two people have identical experiences, no one can understand or speak for another, “let alone against the oppression of anyone whose identity is construed as ‘other’” (ibid.: 58). Even without taking the argument to its logical end, a politics of difference that over emphasizes the fractured character of subjectivity may fail to recognize, as Stasiulis notes, that sites of difference are also sites of power, exploitation and oppression (1992: 294). It may drain its energy through group infighting rather than directing it towards larger systems of power. It remains to be seen whether a radical cultural politics can avoid these pitfalls in the battle over symbolic and material capital. If so, it may be able to infuse the discourse of multiculturalism with a sustained critique of heritage politics and push the policy in a new direction. Exactly which is difficult to surmise, though we can peer into the fog and hope we are headed for more pacific waters.

IV: Multiculturalism as Interculturalism

If the concept of multiculturalism, of an inclusive yet less culturally dominant society, was to be the canvass on which to paint an image of a more accepting and fairer Canada, the policy of multiculturalism, even as it has evolved, has failed to bridge the gap between concept and reality. Some see it rather as having increased the distance by encouraging ethnic division and ghetto-

ization. While it's true the politics of multiculturalism played out in the cultural economy, in popular and official discourses and in the courts has hardened group boundaries and has contributed to social division, other factors should not be dismissed in the rush to find ways to minimize or erase differences in order to build unity. The policy of multiculturalism has not alone led to less social cohesion.

While heritage multiculturalism does allow people to hide racism behind calls for the protection of traditions and culture, this grows out of persistent and renewed notions of ethnic and racial superiority that, arguably, have just taken new form. Also, competitive global markets have spurred labour exploitation, especially of newer immigrants, migrants and refugees, who are in need of employment.¹⁰ Government deregulation and the weakening of labour unions contribute to these groups' susceptibility and increase their reliance on labour contractors and employers who may use an ideology of shared ethnicity for their own profit. The general ascendancy of cultural over class politics as well as ethnic marketing, have also heightened real and fancied perceptions of difference that aren't likely to go away.

But multiculturalism, rather than simply a failed or misguided policy, is better viewed as an important ideological site where individuals and groups struggle for material and symbolic capital to structure or alter inequitable and oppressive physical, social and cultural landscapes. The reason that discourses on multiculturalism have been so charged is that differences indeed matter, not just between classes or between ethnic, racial and gender groups but within them, too. But do they have to always divide or be overcome? We have returned to the central question of this paper. If, as we have seen, liberal, nationalist, communitarian and traditional Marxist philosophies cannot in today's disjunctive and disruptive global milieu sufficiently address the demands of diverse cultural groups for recognition and participa-

tion in forging a renewed Canada, what kind of politics and practice will?

Such a politics must start to build on the relations between people, which first requires a sustained analysis of global and local connections that link self and other. This analysis has already begun and it can provide a bridge between groups struggling against various forms of repression and exploitation. These groups must resist polarizing around officially constructed and rigid categories and link up beyond single and distinct aspects of identity. Part of this analysis shows that we must continue to cast doubts on the popularized and naturalized concepts of race, ethnicity and culture that build walls and erase history.

Wolf, for one, in emphasizing the historical and spatial interactions between people in response to changing modes of production and institutional structures espouses a concept of culture that better reflects what historical anthropology has shown in the past twenty five years:

a view of the connectedness of human aggregates also demands that we rethink the concept of culture. We need to remember that the culture concept came to the fore in a specific historical context, during a period when some European nations were contending for dominance while others were striving for separate identities and independence. The demonstration that each struggling nation possessed a distinctive society, animated by its special spirit or culture, served to legitimate its aspirations to form a separate state of its own. The notion of separate and integral cultures responded to this political project. Once we locate the reality of society in historically changing, imperfectly bounded, multiple and branching social alignments, however, the concept of a fixed, unitary, and bounded culture must give way to a sense of the fluidity and permeability of cultural sets. In the rough-and-tumble of social interaction, groups are known to exploit the ambiguities of inherited forms, to impart new evaluation or valences to them, to borrow forms more expressive of their interests, or to create wholly new forms to answer to changed circumstances. Furthermore, if we think of such interaction not as causative in its own

terms but as responsive to larger economic and politic forces, the explanation of cultural forms must take account of that larger context, that wider field of force. "A culture" is thus better seen as a series of processes that construct, reconstruct, and dismantle cultural materialism in response to identifiable determinants (387).

Applying this process view of culture would alter the heritage concept of multiculturalism by allowing us to see the historical connectedness of cultural practices, codes and materials and how these have been imposed, inherited, borrowed, created and reinterpreted over time. This would shift multiculturalism from multinationalism to interculturalism (Tully, 1995). This is not to go in the direction of liberals or traditional Marxists and try to overcome or supersede attachment to racial, ethnic or other dimensions of identity, but rather to see these in more dynamic and interrelated terms. An intercultural view of life would better fit with any politics of recognition, because by fate of modern history recognizing the 'other' would be to some extent recognizing one's self. Cultural identities have taken shape through years of interaction, not unlike the roots of nearby trees. Indeed it is this always other than self that is part of the migrant mentality that many of us share today, whether our journeys are mental or physical. We travel between different roles in our daily life and in many of these we find ourselves forced to choose between dominant and imposed forms of doing, knowing and being or exclusion.

For radical 'postmodernist' thinkers, the location of the migrant is on the margin. It is here where most migrants or colonized and repressed peoples, Canada's 'multicultural others', have been forced to survive and where they may cling to an alternative notion of self. But in a reconceptualization of identity and social position, the margin can become a place one chooses. Writes hooks:

It was this marginality that I was naming as a central location for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habit of being and the way one lives. As such, I was not speaking of a marginality one wishes to lose—to give up or surrender as part of moving into the centre, but rather as a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist. It offers the possibility of radical perspectives from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds . . . (quoted in Soja & Hooper, 1993: 191).

Soja & Hooper suggest that hooks' political project fits with those that attempt to remap, reorder and reclaim mental and physical spaces of domination, subjection and exploitation. This is done not by opposing and reversing relations of power and creating new exclusions but by creating a "spatiality of inclusion . . . where radical subjectivities can multiply, connect and combine in polycentric communities of identity and resistance" (ibid. 192). This is why the margin is such a critical site for all collectives, as it is here that mixing and change occurs. Ironically, today the margins of social life, the sites of interaction and mixing are the very centres of human activity, the urban spaces where so many of us live. But we shouldn't forget that these are also the sites for corporate headquarters, the houses of global finance and trade and the halls of government power.

Interestingly, Wolf's view would also lead to a consideration of other forces impacting on daily life that affect who we are, the spaces we occupy, all the relationships that mold and remold our selves, our histories and our societies—our ethnic, racial, national or gender based identities being only pieces of the puzzle of what it is to be human. This is not to reduce everything to a Marxist brand of economic determinism and class reductionism. It would be wrong to view racism and ethnic classification only as part of a strategy by the elite class and the state to label and divide the working class to better exploit labour. For example, as Warbur-

ton (1992) and Stasiulis (1990) discuss, not all forms of racism stem directly from relations of production. Rather, it is to avoid a culturalism that reifies dynamic cultural codes, practices and material forms into timeless traditions, modes of behaviour, beliefs and values, into 'a culture'; a culturalism that then imposes this unit on a social collective, itself objectively and officially bounded by racial markings, territory, language or religious beliefs. Commenting on this tendency in Australian multiculturalism Bottomley writes:

culture and ethnicity should not be conflated. Class- and gender-based domination also take cultural forms, and it is essential to recognise that much of what is seen as ethnic discrimination must also be seen in terms of class and gender. The struggle for symbolic capital is constant and waged on a number of fronts (1990: 295).

Bottomley's reminder suggests we should avoid a culturalism that would put the politics of identity and heritage above rather than meshed with the political economics of greed and necessity. It is this culturalism that flourishes in official and popular discourses about multiculturalism and needs to be checked.

Harvey argues for a 'dialectical sense of situatedness' as a bridge between subjectivist and materialist approaches (1993). If we are situated in relations to others, we must look at the whole chains of relations that connect us. For Harvey, "Individuals are heterogeneously constructed subjects, internalizing 'otherness' by virtue of their relations to the world" (ibid.: 58). He suggests that for groups to understand each other and to form alliances, we must identify the similarities that connect us. Harvey insists that similarity is largely found in the realm of political-economic action. For "it is in terms of commodities, money, market exchange, capital accumulation, and the like that we find ourselves sharing a world of similarity increasingly also char-

acterized by homogeneity and sameness” (ibid.: 61). If we consider how cultural materials, codes and practices are increasingly tied to commodity markets and controlled by transnational corporations, especially massive media and information conglomerates, Harvey’s analytic emphasis on material relations is vital to theorizing disjunctures and connections. Following Harvey, if we pay close attention to the materiality of cultural relations, the concept of multiculturalism as interculturalism would also have to include material processes, which are becoming increasingly privatized and global in their reach and impact. We should also note that alliances among some minority groups involved in multiculturalism have often emerged on political and economic issues. These alliances will be even more critical in the coming years when we consider how economic restructuring under global competition is pushing many newer immigrants into low paying, low security, service sector jobs or into the growing sweatshop industries that have reappeared as urban bacteria in the new global economic system.

As for what a significant politics of difference would look like if otherness were recognized without being essentialized or bounded, Tully offers one of the most interesting formulas when he not only moves from multiculturalism to interculturalism but suggests that what is necessary is a shift from the realm of policy and legislation to the arena of constitutional framing. Tully’s starting point is to see the world not as multicultural (many distinct and separated cultures) but as intercultural, with ‘overlapping territories’, ‘intertwined histories’ and durable, not essential, identities.

It is into the turbulent waters of intercultural encounter that he wades to find a path to peaceful coexistence and equitable co-inhabitation. For Tully, this path must lead beyond the unwelcoming currents of modern constitutionalism, which wash away history and cultural difference and try to impose a universal form

of being on diverse groups. Though progressive modern constitutionalism in its various forms attempts to include otherness, it does so “within the authoritative traditions of interpretation of the institutions of modern constitutional societies” (1995: 41). Those who seek recognition must not only overcome force and instrumental power, but the normative influence of modern constitutional language. Writes Tully:

It is not only the force of habits of thought but also this interrelation between the language of constitutionalism and the public institutions of modern societies that makes it extremely difficult in practice to challenge the prevailing forms of constitutional recognition (ibid.: 41).

He suggest that rather than grant groups ‘constitutional rights’ after they have been dispossessed of their lands and histories, we should see people as already constituted by their cultures and other kinds of ‘thwarted or usurped’ associations, such as nations or communities (ibid.: 55). But modern constitutionalism denies this claim since one of the conventions it upholds is that people who come together to form a constitutional body are in some pre-constitutional condition. This doesn’t fit with the reality of a country like Canada, which was populated by collectives of Aboriginal peoples before the Europeans arrived to enlighten and constitutionalize them. Today’s mixed Canadian population makes such a notion even less tenable.

As Tully points out, the aim of any constitutional discussion between already constituted people should be, “a ‘diverse’ federation which recognises and accommodates appropriate forms and degrees of self rule for the claims that survive a fair hearing” (ibid.: 55). The problem is another convention of modern constitutionalism that aims to achieve from any dialogue a uniformed legal and political collectivity. Again, this is not possible without the imposition of force, and it is time that such force, or the threat

of, was no longer part of nation building.

Since the conventions of modern constitutionalism preclude a just dialogue between constituted groups for the reasons mentioned above and others he outlines, Tully calls for a contemporary constitutionalism that draws from 'hidden constitutions of contemporary societies' that can be dug out from the writings and constitutional arrangements of some 'agents of justice' and from the 'applications of constitutional law in particular cases' (ibid.: 100). Furthermore:

a contemporary constitution can recognise cultural diversity if it is conceived as a form of accommodation of cultural diversity. It should be seen as an activity, an intercultural dialogue in which the culturally diverse sovereign citizens of contemporary societies negotiate agreements on their ways of association over time in accord with the conventions of mutual recognition, consent and continuity (ibid.: 184).

With these three conventions, Tully has added a recognition of power to Taylor's politics of recognition. He does not settle for a presumption of equal worth within biased constitutional arrangements but seeks to rearrange constitutional relations for the long-term maintenance of good will, harmony, and possibility. By mutually recognizing the others groups status as equal and dignified, rather than subjected and diminished; by agreeing to their continued self determination, rather than attempting to assimilate them; and by seeking their consent to any change in mutual relations, rather than dominating and imposing on them different ways of doing, knowing and being, intercultural encounter can be one of discovery and exchange rather than one of violence. These conventions should be part of any practice of multiculturalism if Canada is serious about removing the madness from the mosaic

V: Conclusion

As in many other parts of the world, we have discussed how in Canada racial, ethnic and cultural otherness continues to lead to social division and unrest. If we return to the metaphor of an ocean journey from the title, we could say that three routes through these rough currents have been mapped out and two navigated. One takes us to the repressive banks of uniformity. In the 1960s, after a long anchoring, Canada moved clear of such unwelcoming and repressive shores. In the early 1970s it chartered a course towards a multicultural land, where it was believed people could openly proclaim their multiple ways of doing, knowing and being, and could participate in creating a place of acceptance. But the original headings were based on outdated readings of the formation and content of cultural identity. At the outset, there was also little knowledge of what provisions were necessary for the journey. Early government policy and funding alone was insufficient to propel Canada to the promised land. New rights legislation, a Multicultural Act and other measures were introduced to help weather the persisting high tides of racial discrimination, shifting political winds, and economic storms. But still Canadian society has been swept in the direction of a broken landscape of jagged shoals that now threaten to split apart the national vessel. A third as of yet uncharted route lies between these two treacherous shores. That is, if we bravely decide not to abandon the journey and simply drift where market currents and the captains of industry would take us.

The problem, if we choose the third route, is deciding which chart will best guide us safely to where we are headed. I have argued here that liberalism, communitarianism, nationalism and traditional Marxism, even when altered to take in the horizons of difference do not provide a sufficient compass. The path must follow a map that includes four features of the present social landscape. First, otherness is internal to self, and omission, exclu-

sion, repression or extermination will not make it go away. By implication, self realization is not awakened internally, but comes through recognizing our situatedness in the webs of relations that link us to the world. As our position or the conditions around us alter, so too does our sense of who we are. Second, the webs in which we are presently entwined are increasingly more intercultural than multi-national, though we continue to represent the world as if this isn't so. Culturally bounded and homogeneous definitions of the collective are more prescriptive than descriptive, more wishful than accurate. This understanding, though, should not justify a move to a purposeful policy of integration, as the dominant forms of doing, knowing and being will likely override all others. Integration or transformation may indeed happen over time as people interact, but relations should be based on the principles of mutual recognition, consent and continuity, and not on the ability to dominate. This responds to the third feature, which is that people previously and variously constituted and cultured are increasingly coming to inhabit the same spaces and must find ways to live together. An effective multicultural approach must find a way to build these principles into the decision making process, perhaps by integrating them into the constitutional framework. The fourth feature is that the cultural and economic realms are overlapping and interposing. Who we are, our identity, is greatly defined by both our symbolic and material relations, so multiculturalism must address the contradictions of capitalism that continuously change relations of production and distribution for the betterment of some people and the detriment of others. Guaranteeing survival in the present is just as important as protecting the ways of the past. Though very roughly sketched out here, if these four features are further charted and added to the map of today's social landscape, it's my hope that Canada's multicultural journey may find a calmer way through the present social turbulence.

Notes

1. Germany, the European Community and South Africa are the most evident examples of integration or federation, as well as reconciliation with 'rebels' groups in Angola, the Philippines, and Guatemala. Examples of the latter movement include, Yugoslavia, the old Soviet states, Nigeria, Mexico, Algeria, Czechoslovakia and Canada.
2. Changes over the last fifty years in technology and science have greatly altered our perceptions of the world as well as our daily experiences. Our relationships have become increasingly mediated, distant and complex and, therefore, harder to control. Some examples include 24 hour satellite broadcasts, the internet, global financial markets, foreign ownership of local factories, the transnational production, marketing and distribution of commodities, the arms trade, Aids, and many environmental threats and disasters. The effects of global processes on local life spaces continuously reshape our mental and physical landscapes and force us to readjust to new patterns.
3. Eugene Roosens (1989) has described this emergence of ethnic identity as a process of ethnogenesis, which occurs when people who may have had historic socio-cultural ties feel threatened in some way by a dominant group.
4. For an excellent examination of the crisis provoking nature of capitalism see Harvey (1989).
5. While the policy and practice of multiculturalism to some extent effects all Canadians, it is especially directed towards people from a non-anglo, non-franco, non-native ancestry. In taking up multiculturalism, therefore, this paper will tend to pay particular attention to the history of 'other' Canadians and immigrants and will not sufficiently address the history of struggle of Aboriginal peoples, French Canadians, women or other 'minority' groups.
6. In fact, since 1940, the population of British-only descent has been below 50% (Tepper, 1994).
7. The older members of these groups were bolstered by nationalists who immigrated after WW2 (Paquet, 1994).
8. The multiculturalism Act "sought to promote cultures, reduce discrimination, and accelerate institutional change . . . (Elliott and Fleras, 1994: 67).

9. The report *Equality Now!* was produced by the Standing Committee on Visible Minorities in Canada, in 1984.
10. See Arat-Koc (1992).

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