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“Dangerous Edge of Things” - Pushing the Frontier to a New Mestizaje in Firefly

Abstract: My article is related to the use of Gloria Anzaldua’s concept of mestizaje and Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis in analyzing the possible hybridity in Joss Whedon’s Firefly, where an intergalactic Sino-American federation called the Alliance recreates the palimpsest of civilization of the kind described by Turner, but also forges a new cultural mix: a Wild West backdrop with Chinese characteristics. I examine the ways in which Whedon’s show differs from other space opera settings like Star Trek or Star Wars, but also how it ends up reproducing certain orientalizing tropes that feature in science fiction. I aim to see how mestizaje is mirrored in linguistic, sexual, and religious ways through the show’s engagement with in-betweenness, especially in the guise of its adoption of Chinese culture, and whether Whedon’s Firefly enables the creation of Anzaldua’s type of hybridity.

Keywords: mestizaje, frontier, palimpsest, hybridity, Firefly