

Between the Plural 'Us' and the Excluded 'Other': Autochthons and Ethnic Groups in the Americas

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The Hybrid Ethnicity of the Americas

Tsvetan Todorov, in his book *Us and Them. French Thinking on Human Diversity*, asked the following question: "How does one, how should one relate to those who do not belong to the same community as we do?"¹ This question has been posed somewhat differently by intellectuals of the Americas anxious to develop paradigms of identity that will contribute to the successful construction of a society whose aim is to integrate heterogeneous ethnic groups: "How does one, how should one relate to those who are members of our new society but who live either on its margins or who are frequently considered as different?" The mixed-race (*métissage*) approach, applied to the Latin Americas situation, was in part a response to this question. Here the "us" did not designate metropolitan Europeans engaged in thinking about the "others," that is to say non-Europeans, but Latin Americans thinking about relations among various dominant groups and the varying "others" within their own society, since the "others" were part of "us." The meaning of "us" is equally problematic when applied to North America. "What happens when words like 'community' and 'us' cease to have the clear and immediate meaning that Todorov seems to ascribe to them?" Sherry Simon recently asked.² Although offering a general critique of the monological conception of culture and identity – a critique based on Bakhtin's work on polyphony and dialogism, on James Snead's investigation of the hybrid nature of several texts belonging to the European

canon (such as *The Odyssey* and *The Divine Comedy*), and on the studies of Angelo Ara and Claudio Magris in regard to the heterogeneity of Trieste – she nevertheless begins her essay on a personal note, describing life in the multicultural city of Montreal, where “many children come out of mixed or immigrant marriages, some going to French schools, some to English,” and who can not “define themselves as products of a single culture” (pp. 15-16). Although I agree with Sherry Simon that the “us” of culture is never a given (it should be mentioned that Todorov himself writes that we must “give up basing our thinking on such a distinction” [between us and them] p. 421), it is essential here to emphasize the special ambiguity of the conception of “us” in the ex-colonies of the New World, where the “collision of cultures” implied not only, on the one hand, a confrontation among Spanish, Portuguese, British, and French colonists, but also between the colonists and the African slaves as well as with the immigrants who arrived after independence. Todorov’s conception of nationhood (p. 422) as “a more or less perfect (although never total) coincidence of a State and a culture” – which he toned down a bit by adding that a culture is often identified with a particular region, a group of countries, or even a stratum of the population (pp. 424-425) – is even less applicable to the new societies of America than it is to Europe. Not only are we talking about hybrid societies (and what society isn’t, to some degree?), but of societies conceived as hybrid, either multicultural (Canada) or mixed-race (Latin America). If, as Ernest Renan insisted at the end of the XIXth century, the idea of the modern nation is based on a conscious disregard for our diverse ethnic origins, the concepts of identity of the societies of the New World have often been based on an explicit symbolization of their heterogeneity.

The Americas as Europe’s Other

Todorov’s question thus becomes extremely complex in the context of the Americas. This complexity, however, does not concern only the heterogeneity of “us.” It also concerns the new society’s position in relation to the metropolis. The “us” we are talking about is

no longer Europe, a society that for a long time considered itself the cultural center of the world and which gave itself the mission of civilizing the "others"; rather these are societies that consider themselves peripheral and whose self-representation is often based on the way Europe saw them. Thus this "us" had already been conceptualized as "other" – as barbarian, pagan, cannibal. Conscious of being Europe's other, these societies manifest various attitudes about it; from a feeling of inferiority in relation to Europe to a desire for self-affirmation; from anger at the European attitude toward colonized and formerly colonized countries to a revalorization of a once-devalorizing label (such as the cannibal as symbol of the new, hybrid Latin-American society, struggling for its independence and place among the world's "civilized" nations).

To this day we can find echoes of the indignation and pride that the Cuban writer and essayist Roberto Fernandez expressed when a European journalist asked him if there existed a distinct Latin-American culture.³ For instance, in his introduction to an anthology entitled, *Notre Amérique métisse. Cinq cents ans après les Latino-Américains parlent aux Européens*,⁴ the Ecuadorian author Jorge Enrique Adoum complains of the "French scorn for our world," and of "the European ignorance of Latin America."⁵ As part of his idealistic vision of Latin-American culture, Adoum describes it as "so rich in mixtures and *metissages* that it is one of the most fertile and rich [cultures] in the world" (p. 13). However, although the editors of this volume claim to reverse the usual critical approach, in which thought – predefined as European – is illustrated by examples coming from elsewhere, the editors' affirmation that the *Latinos* who write in this book provide the regard of the "other" (p. 6) as opposed to the European version of the "universal," only underscores, by its very formulation, the problematic situation of those who are, in spite of all, convinced that they will always be considered as the others within a more "central" society.

Many Latin-Americans are acutely aware of living on the "fringe" of Western society, cut off from the centers where knowledge advances, where new technologies are developed and where political and economic decisions that will affect them are made. As opposed to those intellectuals who emphasize independence and therefore insist on their specificity (the ideological standard of

mixed-raced America), those who have adopted the fringe-periphery paradigm demand above all a central place in a new world order. In *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, written in 1950, the Nobel-Prize winning poet and essayist Octavio Paz denounces the marginalization of the Latin-Americans and calls for a world in which Mexicans will have the right to participate in the resolution of world problems. The multiple implications of Antonio Machado's epigram – "The other does not exist: so says rational faith, that incurable conviction of human reason [...] But the other will not allow itself to be exterminated."⁶ – are explored by Paz in the course of the essay. However, the key insights into the meaning of the epigram – the demand for a voice, the desire of so-called peripheral nations to escape marginalization, the critique of the dichotomy between First and Third worlds, and the problematic nature of certain intellectual frameworks that had been considered universal not long before – apply not only to Machado but to Paz's own attitude as developed in the essay. In it we can see how Paz's search for cultural specificity gradually leads to a desire to play a more important role in the making of decisions that will affect a large part of the world in this era of world-wide decision-making. It is not only that the intellectuals of the periphery want to fight inequality and lessen their dependence on the great powers: they also want to be taken seriously by the institutions of the metropolis. Faced with worldwide problems like pollution, growing poverty, and armed conflict, these intellectuals demand the right to play a role in solving them. For Paz, the fate of human beings is now the fate of Humanity: he believes that nationalism should be replaced by a worldwide quest to improve the lot of humanity. The fringes, Paz writes, which have lived on the periphery of history, should rise up and take their rightful place, because there no longer is a center: all humans, including Europeans and North Americans, have become "peripheral." As the Mexican philosopher Leopoldo Zea has written, barbarism is found not only on the margins but in the center as well, as the Second World War decisively proved: "It is not the monster Caliban that we find on the other side: it is Prospero himself, with all his monstrosities; Prospero, with his cheating, stealing, and cupidity, who created the image he wanted of the ones whom he cheated, stole from, and mistreated."⁷

Internal Marginalization

Latin America's vacillation between the desire to be part of the modern world and thus enter the universal history of the West, and the desire to lay claim to a cultural specificity by creating a national or continental identity (as was, for example, the case of José Martí), or numerous other, intermediary positions and the attempt to reconcile the two, has given rise to endless debates that often leave out altogether the problem of internal marginalization. In their desire to assert themselves in regard to metropolitan institutions and to create their own cultural identity, the new nations of the Americas have shown a marked tendency to homogenize the internal heterogeneity of their societies – a heterogeneity produced by the presence of Hispanic, autochthonous, African-American and non-Hispanic immigrant populations. This homogenization has been carried out by various means; a symbolization of identity, the creation of a literary canon, of political and economic institutions, and often even by more direct action, such as the outright elimination of the internal other through massacres. Isabel Hernandez, Professor of Socio-Anthropology in Buenos Aires, has written that the extermination of the Indian population in the Araucania region of Chile was “a matter of making it possible for our societies to join the international community of wealthy nations by creating the conditions necessary to ensure the supremacy of capital.”⁸ As a consequence, the Indian “continues to wander at the periphery of our history” (*ibid.*, p. 50), and this occurs even when the nations of the New World neither explicitly reject the possibility of a non-Western contribution to the building of a new society nor engage in actions that directly conflict with their affirmation of Indian rights. In order to lay claim to a place in the community of modern nations, these new societies establish an “equality of right, an inequality of fact,” (Hernandez, *ibid.* p. 51). This occurs because they use the concept of the *internal* other in order to assert their difference as post-colonial and mixed-race societies without, however, giving voice to marginalized ethnic groups or to permit them any significant participation in national political, economic or cultural life. In this latter case the internal

other is little more than a pretext for a strategy of totalizing identity that seeks to affirm the specificity of the peripheral society in relation to the metropolitan centers without being open to the other *inside* their own society.

Latin America, peripheral both to Europe and the United States, creates its own peripheries – and the two situations are not unrelated. This is because the marginalization of certain sectors of society in the new nations is in part a result of the struggle against their marginal situation, of their attempt to create a strong post-colonial identity and build a nation capable of taking its place among the “civilized nations” of the world. However, the reasons for the perpetuation of this marginalization are not only practical (that is, for use in power struggles and strategies of self-affirmation); they are also theoretical and methodological, resulting from the way in which relations between the hegemonic and weaker countries are conceptualized. The assertion of a simple dichotomy between a metropolitan or colonial center and a colonized periphery tends to hypostasize the ideas of the West and the Third World while simplifying the complexity of peripheral societies. When this paradigm is accepted by Western intellectuals there is even more oversimplification because of their ignorance of the socio-political reality of the countries studied. Recently Arun Mukherjee has criticized the kind of Western “post-colonial” discourse that is based on the hypostasized dichotomy of center and periphery: “When post-colonial theory bases its discourse on the ideas of center and periphery it necessarily ignores the fact that post-colonial societies have their own internal peripheries and centers”; this is because such a theory “blots out Bakhtin’s concept of the heteroglossia of literary and social discourses” created by “conflicts of race, sex, language, religion, ethnicity and political affiliation.”⁹ Although European and North American scholars have shown more interest in the problems associated with autochthonous and other ethnically marginalized groups in the Americas than in Asia or Africa (the groups which Mukherjee’s article deals with), the very act of accepting the paradigm of the West as center and everything else as periphery produces in both cases an homogenized picture that denies the inherent heterogeneity of societies as well as world-

wide changes that have led to the diffusion and spread of a variety of economic, financial, and cultural centers.

The Center / Periphery Paradigm

It might therefore be preferable to abandon this spatial metaphor and instead analyze the problematic relations existing both between societies and within a single society in terms of power relations. However, while recognizing the practical, methodological, and theoretical limitations of the paradigm center / periphery, and in hopes that a new and more satisfactory paradigm will be developed to replace it, we cannot deny the usefulness of this dyad for conceptualizing our world. Used by various disciplines as well as in the "cognitive mapping"¹⁰ of the real as experienced by most individuals, this metaphor is not about to disappear anytime soon. In a recently published anthology entitled *Centers: Ideas and Institutions*, a group of sociologists, anthropologists and historians used the notion of center – especially as it was developed in the 1950s by the sociologist Edward Shils – to analyze the processes of cohesion and social integration. Shils used the term center not only as it is generally understood in the social sciences – that is, as "a spatial concentration of certain social activities, or a structural concentration of functions and forces" – but also in the sense of "system of fundamental values" or "set of irreducible values and beliefs that constitute the identity of individuals and unite them in a shared universe."¹¹ The idea of center implies a corresponding notion of periphery or "the elements that must be integrated" (*ibid.*). According to Shils, in modern society the center extends farther and farther toward the periphery, creating greater integration and better social cohesion; and this through consensus rather than coercion. This system of values, in order to continue and even spread, requires a "central institutional system" which is not a creation of the State but rather a collection of several centers and sub-centers that are often in conflict. No center, in any case, functions with everyone's consent.

For Shils, national consciousness constitutes the paradigmatic example of the center as a system of fundamental values. In a brief

outline of his intellectual development Shils explains that the integration of society had always been the principal object of his research, and that such ideas as “shared values” or Durkheim’s “collective consciousness” failed, as far as he was concerned, to account for what united human beings in a single society. It was in thinking about the coronation of Queen Elisabeth II of England, which he describes as a veritable “national communion,” (p. 269) that the groundwork for the development of his idea of the center was laid. The idea took more concrete shape in the course of his research on colonial and post-colonial societies. In particular it was the relationship between Indian intellectuals and the British literary and scientific culture that directly inspired the concrete notion of “metropolis and province,” which Shils later changed to center and periphery. Shils identified a parallel between the interest in British institutions manifested by Indian intellectuals and the interest of Russian intellectuals of the nineteenth century in Western European culture, as well as the interest of American intellectuals in French, German, and British institutions. He argued that the paradigm of center and periphery was particularly productive for describing the strategies of modernization employed by former African and Asian colonies: “I saw these efforts as attempts at establishing relatively unified societies, with a single and unified national economy, and with a clear-cut and accepted center. The starting point for these efforts was a heterogeneous collection of more or less tribal societies that had been and still were strong” (p. 278), and which resisted the efforts of the new leadership to dominate and integrate the peripheries.

In this intellectual autobiography Shils thus applies the paradigm of center and periphery to two distinct situational types – the creation of new societies out of former colonies composed of several, often antagonistic tribal societies, and the relationship between colonial or post-colonial elites and a metropolis. In contrast to Shils, for whom the central question is how a society is constituted (and thus for whom the following question, Durkheim’s, must be answered: “What causes a collection of human beings, who lack any *a priori* relation, to form themselves into a ‘collective,’ that is to say an aggregate, bound together by specific and interdependent relations?”),¹² the literary critics and sociologists of the Americas

have, for several years now, been more interested in the problematic aspects associated with the creation of an ex-colonial society composed not only of a diverse group of colonized ethnic groups, but also by the descendants of the European colonizers, of immigrants who arrived after independence and, in the case of Latin America, of African slaves. Instead of looking at how a periphery is integrated into a center – as Shils's paradigm would have it – , or of conceiving of the periphery as something “which should be integrated,” these researchers focus their studies in two directions: on the perpetuation of marginality – economic, political and/or cultural – among certain ethnic groups in spite of strategies and discourses of identity that are explicitly inclusive (that is, strategies based on concepts of multiculturalism or *metissage* present in the societies of the New World that consider themselves peripheral); and, on the other hand, on the refusal by some members of these marginalized groups to be assimilated while at the same time asserting their right to participate in all spheres of public life.

The problem of marginalization is considerably less ambiguous in the United States. This is a result not only of its political and economic hegemony, but also because the official national ideology of the U.S. is based on the concept of the melting-pot in which immigrants belonging to various ethnic groups are supposed to merge into an amalgam where differences will disappear: this is quite different from the Latin-American concept of *metissage*, whose supporters emphasize the richness of, and continuity with the pre-colonial past; or that of Canadian multiculturalism, where differences between ethnic groups are underscored. Even if the ideology of a hybrid culture often disguises either a hidden desire for assimilation or a strategy of symbolic homogenization of differences (and in its results therefore often differs little from the effects and implications of the melting-pot ideology), nevertheless it explicitly accentuates the concept of the plural “us”.¹³

The Case of Quebec

This valorization of plurality is often used to establish a fundamental difference between the new societies of the Americas and the

ex-colonial and neo-colonial powers (Europe and the United States) to which these new societies feel peripheral. Facing what they consider to be the threat of the American empire, and influenced by their problematic relations with the ex-colonial powers, the Latin American nations have often sought to establish unity among themselves. For its part, Quebec, which feels particularly marginalized by being both a minority within the predominantly anglophone Canadian federation, and as part of Canada finds itself on the fringe of the giant United States, has tried to establish relations with its "Latin" neighbors to the south. In an essay, entitled "The Unavowable America," written in 1984 for a special issue of the Quebecois review *Possibles* devoted to the ambiguous nature of the relationship between Quebec and the United States, Marcel Fournier emphasized Quebec's historically difficult position by quoting Alexis de Toqueville's 1831 statement that francophone Lower Canada was but "a drop in the [anglophone] ocean."¹⁴ Fournier went on to deplore the "the pettiness and economic dependency," "the cultural alienation," "the Americanization," and the "conquest" of the Quebec spirit by "Hollywood movies, comic books, and American television" (p. 7). Marcel Rioux is one of many Quebec writers and intellectuals who has often denounced the growing cultural influence of the United States on Quebec: he has called this influence a "rape of the soul."¹⁵ Nor is it surprising that the Quebec magazine *Liberté* published the inaugural address given by Julio Cortázar to "The Meeting of North and Latin American Intellectuals" held in Mexico City in 1982. Cortázar declared that for Latin Americans literature "is one of the best weapons in this battle against what some have called the American dream but which would more appropriately be called the North American nightmare; against the attempts at cultural enslavement through propaganda and deculturation; against the insidious vampirization known as brain drain, which robs us of important intellectual resources simply because we can neither compete on the level of opportunities nor temptations."¹⁶ Marcel Fournier, in his article, describes the strategies that were developed during the 1960s and 1970s to counter the influence of the giant neighbor to the north: in particular he mentions "the attempt to encircle the United States by establishing ties of solidarity and coop-

eration among all those who, in Central and South America, and in the Caribbean, fight against United States domination."¹⁷ For Fournier, as well as for numerous other intellectuals of the period, this solidarity was justified not only by the common fate shared by societies threatened with cultural invasion from the United States, but also by other resemblances: "Beyond our physical and cultural differences, there exists a definite kinship between the people of Quebec and the Americans of the southern hemisphere: a "Latin" character, a certain joviality and great sociability. In a more rigorous fashion literary critics and sociologists have been able to establish solid connections between the literatures, social structures and political organizations of these diverse societies" (*ibid.*). The common cultural aims that united and still unite Latin Americans and Quebecois bare witness to an affinity that some researchers have been able to detect between the two societies.

The special situation of Quebec, not only in relation to the United States but in also in relation to Canada, has made its relations with its own minorities extremely problematic. Inspired by Alain Finkielkraut's essay "The Defeat of Thought" (*La Défaite de la pensée*) Monique LaRue has recently written an essay for a special number of *Possibles*, entitled *Culture Cultures*. In it she writes that "threatened with extinction from the beginning of its existence, the so-called 'francophone majority,' faced with the Other, is also a minority, spontaneously ethnocentric."¹⁸ Ending her essay with a panegyric to the virtues of philosophy LaRue, in a somewhat caricatured form, echoes Finkielkraut's position against the *Volkgeist* ideology while at the same time denouncing Quebec's own "cultural isolation." "Because happily, there is philosophy. What is special, irreplaceable, superior, and invaluable about philosophy is that it transcends all national determinants" (p. 11).

For several years there has been growing criticism of what is decried as ethnocentrism. It is significant that much of this criticism comes not only from immigrants and minority-group members but from ethnic Quebecois themselves. For example, Pierre Nepveu has written that, although Quebec "has always found it difficult to deal with foreigners,"¹⁹ he has noted a marked change now that Quebec has succeeded in creating its own identity, particularly through culture:

In fact, the dominant discourse concerning the culture of Quebec was framed in such a way that the inclusion of other cultures was made difficult: indeed this discourse often served merely to nurture a certain ethnocentrism. However, this ethnocentrism seemed inevitable to me, since the immediate goal was our acceptance as a single whole culture. In this sense, the only way to forge an identity was to define oneself in relation to – and apart from – a particular history and tradition. Since the defeat of the referendum it seems to me that we have entered a different phase. (p. 14)

The publication of such inter- and “transcultural” reviews as *Humanitas*, *La revue de la réalité interculturelle* and *Vice versa* bares witness not only to the cultural dynamism of the immigrant and minority communities, but to a greater acknowledgment of the contribution of these groups to Quebec cultural life itself.

Simon Harel, however, in a long essay entitled *Le Voleur de parcours. Identité et cosmopolitisme dans la littérature québécoise contemporaine*,²⁰ disputes this supposed Quebec openness to the other by asserting that this other is always relegated to a specific locale within the city or is treated as a consumer good:

In the imagination of the citizen of Montreal Saint-Laurent Boulevard represents a stage on which the manifestation of difference is enacted. Here the will to segregation is expressed in the attempt to confine heterogeneity to a precise locale.²¹

Herald of a cultural heterogeneity, Saint-Laurent Boulevard takes the place of a store window, which is why there is always the danger of a “setting in motion” of this interculture [...] (p. 23)

[...] From *Cookie's Main Lunch* to *Bagel Etc.*, banality and the factitious replace history. The *Main* becomes a window where one is welcome to consume what appears to be a common cultural patrimony. (p. 26)

Although he does accept the fact that there is greater intercultural openness today – illustrated, for example, by the success of the Haitian novelist Dany Laferrière and the Italo-Quebecois Marco Micone – Harel insists that one must “be skeptical of such phenomena as folklorization and ghettoization, which would turn these texts into examples of ethnic or immigrant literature, *made in Quebec*,” thereby attesting to a supposed “integration of the periphery into the Quebecois literary corpus”: according to Harel, such an attitude merely manifests “a self-satisfied interest in the ‘ethnics’” (p. 31). This criticism is similar to that voiced by some writers who belong to various minority groups in anglophone Canada.

This ambiguous attitude toward the other can in large measure be attributed – as has already been indicated – to the political and

socio-economic situation experienced, until quite recently, by the francophone Quebecois population in relation to the anglophone population. As a result the other (formerly an Englishman, now an immigrant) was perceived as a threat against whom one had to be protected: "The representation of the foreigner thus expressed a defensive gesture, the production of a discourse on alterity, the normative, and the discriminatory [...]" (Harel, 40). In order to consolidate one's own identity it was necessary to cast foreignness far from oneself. Harel wonders whether Quebec literature will ever be able to "escape the fascination with the assertion of a strong national identity ('Quebecitude' as the locus of the memorable): *je me souviens*,²² which could make possible a true symbolic integration of difference capable of overcoming the "symbolic reconquest" of territory accompanied by "a narcissistic infatuation, an obsessive return of the national 'I' and a concomitant rejection of the Other" (pp. 87-88). Cosmopolitanism, which Harel defines as "the expression of fluidity, heterotopy," is only possible when identity is experienced as sure and relatively unambiguous; in such conditions the foreigner ceases to be perceived as threatening (p. 93). By contrast, in the traditional defensive discourse "the foreigner, in the literary context, is an actor symbolized by a non-discursive and unsystematized exteriority. At the same time this 'represented' exteriority contributes to the reaffirmation of a cultural unanimity that has created the figure of the foreigner" (p. 92).

Although one result of the discourse on *métissage* in Latin America was the creation of an *internal* other, this other was not presented as external to or outside the system: it therefore could not – by differentiation – be used to define a monolithic "us". Both José Martí and Roberto Fernández Retamar conceived of the other as part of "us," in spite of the discursive marginalisation that kept it apart as producer of discourse and knowledge. At the same time they used the European and North American other to define – by opposition – an apparently hybrid "us." While describing the outlines of the new openness toward the other in Quebec, Harel nevertheless expresses concern about another tendency, which he called "oceanic fusion" or "the denial of cultural differences through a simplistically harmonious multiplication of minority individualities"; a multiplication that embodies a "a naive val-

orization of intercultural experience" (p. 41). Harel explains that "[...] the valorization [...] of a flaccid and peaceful coexistence among cultures of origin (which is a rough definition of multiculturalism) assumes, in spite of the denials, that there exists a solid core of transcendent identity which subsumes all differences" (p. 54). Official support for linguistic plurality, and the public interest in multilingualism, can, according to Harel, produce a "a fraudulent foreignness. The immigrant's mother tongue is scrupulously preserved as testimony, property, a patrimonial legacy. It becomes part of the imaginary museum of culture that pretends to accept and harmoniously ingest all differences" (pp. 84-85).

The critical examination of "pure" Quebecitude, as well as of various forms of assimilation and neutralization of the other, has intensified over the past few years. Evidence of this process has been manifested in both the publication of a growing number of works written by immigrants, and a body of critical and theoretical works written by "neo-quebécois" intellectuals. Antonio D'Alfonso, in his *L'Autre Rivage* ("The Other Shore"), challenges one of the basic principals of assimilation, the melting-pot: "I do not mix, I am an impure identity, but I am not hybrid."²³ Rejecting the notion of neutralization he insists instead on the importance of coexistence among various cultural entities that meet and confront each other instead of melting into an anonymous and harmonious mass. Lamberto Tassinari takes on certain ideas that have been rather fashionable of late, such as "interculture." Tassinari asserts that the concept of interculture, unlike that of the melting-pot, emphasizes the static and essentialist nature of ethnic identity. He himself prefers the idea of transculture, which implies "the passage across a single culture while at the same time going beyond it." On the other hand, terms like "intercultural" or "multicultural" "both define a totality and circumscribe it in space and time."²⁴

The debate over the constantly changing terminology used to designate new cultural formations – such as transculture, interculture, multicultural, the space between cultures, hybrid, mosaic, *métissage*, and the like – makes the conceptualization of the "other" more difficult, sometimes even less comprehensible than "us". The assertion of Monique LaRue, who fervently preaches universal values and individual human rights, is surely under-

standable within a context so complex that a strategy of collective self-affirmation (one that is not necessarily nationalist), and of resistance to hegemonic centers, can sometimes limit or even threaten the identity and attempts at cultural resistance of other ethnic groups (groups that are generally, although not always, even more marginalized). The polemical nature of many essays on the subject does nothing to further a debate that is often mired in a sterile oscillation between two opposing positions: the universalists against the nationalists, individual human rights against collective rights. The constant dichotomizing between center and periphery often obscures the fact that centers and peripheries exist not in isolation but relationally; that a periphery can only be defined in relation to a center (even if a provisional one); that centers and peripheries are not stable and homogenous entities; that there exist peripheries inside other peripheries just as there are peripheries inside of centers; and that in any case, this is ultimately a rather simplistic, metaphorical way of conceptualizing the complex and ever-changing configuration of the world.

Notes

1. Paris, 1989, p. 421.
2. "Espaces incertains de la culture," in *Fictions de l'identitaire au Québec*, by Sherry Simon, Pierre l'Hérault, Robert Schwartzwald, Robert Schwartzwald and Alexis Nouss, Montréal, 1991, p. 22.
3. *Calibán. Apuntes sobre la cultura en nuestra América*, Mexico, 1972, p. 7.
4. "Our mixed-race America. Five hundred years after the Latin-Americans spoke to the Europeans." (translator's note)
5. Anne Rémiche-Martynov and Graciela Schneier-Madanes (eds). Paris, 1992, pp. 17 and 14.
6. *El laberinto de la soledad*, Mexico, 1976, p. 7.
7. *Discurso desde la marginación y la barbarie*, Barcelona, 1988, p. 283.
8. "Le calme règne sur le Cône sud. Le génocide des Indiens", in Rémiche-Martynov and Schneier-Madanes, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
9. "Whose Post-Colonialism and Whose Postmodernism?" *World Literature Written in English*, 30, no 2, 1990, p. 6.
10. I borrow this concept from Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham, 1991, p. 51
11. Liah Greenfield and Michel Martin (eds.), Chicago, 1988, p. IV.

12. Martine Xiberras, *Les Théories de l'exclusion*, Paris, 1993, p. 37.
13. For enquiries into the problematic nature of explicitly inclusive ideologies in Canada and Latin America, see the following works:
 - Chanady, Amaryll, "L'institution littéraire et l'exclusion de l'autochtone en Amérique latine," *Surfaces*, 2, no. 5, 1992, pp. 1–27.
 - "La conceptualisation de l'État par les minorités ethniques et les immigrants," in *L'État et les Minorités*, (ed.) Jean Lafontant, Saint-Boniface, 1993, pp. 111–126.
 - "L'Indien et les discours identitaires," in *L' 'Indien,' instance discursive*, (eds.) Antonio Gómez-Moriana and Danièle Trottier, Candiac, Québec, 1993, pp. 293–310.
 - "L'ouverture vers l'Autre : immigration, interpénétration culturelle et mondialisation des perspectives," in *La question indentitaire au Canada francophone. Récits, parcours, enjeux, hors-lieux*. (eds.) Jocelyn Létourneau and Roger Bernard, Sainte-Foy, 1994, pp. 167–188.
 - "Latin American Imagined Communities and the Postmodern Challenge," in *Latin American Identity and Constructions of Difference*, (ed) Amaryll Chanady, Minneapolis, 1994, pp. i–xlviii.
 - "Canadian Literature and the Postcolonial Paradigm," *Textual Studies in Canada* (in press).
14. "Editorial," *Possibles*, 8, no. 4, 1984: p. 5.
15. "Requiem pour un rêve?," *The Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 12, nos. 1–2, 1987, pp. 13–14.
16. "Paroles inaugurations lors de la Réunion d'intellectuels nord-américains et latino-américains, à Mexico, en septembre 1982," *Liberté* 148, 1983, p. 7.
17. "Editorial," *op. cit.*, p. 7.
18. "Le Québec entre la culture et les cultures," *Possibles*, 14, no. 3, 1990, p. 9.
19. "La littérature québécoise des années 80 : une culture qui s'internationalise?" *Humanitas. La revue de la réalité interculturelle*, nos. 20–21, 1987, p. 15.
20. "The Accidental Thief. Identity and Cosmopolitanism in Contemporary Quebec Literature." (translator's note)
21. Longueuil, Le Préambule 1989, p. 22.
22. "I remember." The motto of Quebec. (translator's note.)
23. Montréal, VLB 1987, p. 143.
24. "Le Projet transculturel," in *Sous le signe du Phénix : entretiens avec quinze créateurs italo-québécois*, Fulvio Caccia (ed.), Montreal, 1995, p. 299.