



RE-PRESENTING AMERICA(S): CANADIAN WRITING AND ITS PATH TOWARDS A HYBRID SURVIVAL

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ABSTRACT: The task undertaken within this theoretical study is to reflect upon contemporary debates concerning national identity, especially in what concerns the condition of Canada, as to find out how the idea of a fixed time and space might be destabilised. Margaret Atwood's thematic guide *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972) provides me with the major framework for conducting such analysis, even though the conclusion whereto I get thereby is slightly different from hers. Time, space, identity, reality: everything entails not stability and/or the reinforcement of pureness – on the contrary, these terms all depend on changing continually. The changes never stop, they are just rearranged in a metamorphic array of events occurring sequentially and overlaying one another. In this confusing and complex cultural functioning, it is essential to take such ambivalent and multifaceted identity inconsistency into account when one tries to understand how cultures emerge, interact, and proliferate in the Americas. Nations are texts, those who integrate these nations are readers, and literature is therefore the subjective reality that surfaces out from their experiencing this specific locale. The parallels that might be drawn between the countries within the American continent, and their relevance and/or applicability to the understanding of one another, is an evidence of their interdependence. Fixed identities are never there to be respected; they exist to be questioned, discredited, and finally obliterated.

KEYWORDS: Survival. America(s). Hybridity.

RESUMO: O desafio que encaro neste estudo teórico é o de refletir acerca de debates contemporâneos sobre identidade nacional, especialmente no que concerne à condição do Canadá, para entender como a ideia de tempo e espaço fixos pode ser desestabilizada. O guia temático de Margaret Atwood intitulado *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972) me fornece com o aparato principal para conduzir tal análise, ainda que a conclusão em que chego difere consideravelmente daquela na qual chega a autora. Tempo, espaço, identidade, realidade: tudo isso gera não estabilidade ou reforço de algo puro – muito pelo contrário, todos estes termos dependem de uma mudança contínua. As mudanças nunca acabam, são apenas rearranjadas em um leque metafórico de eventos que ocorrem sequencialmente e se sobrepõem uns aos outros. Neste funcionamento cultural confuso e complexo, é essencial ter em mente a

inconsistência das identidades ambivalentes e multifacetadas ao tentar compreender como culturas emergem, interagem e proliferam nas Américas. Nações são textos, aqueles que as integram são leitores e a literatura então se comporta como a realidade subjetiva que surge da experiência do local específico. Os paralelos que podem ser traçados entre países do continente americano, e a sua relevância e/ou aplicabilidade para a compreensão uns dos outros, deixa evidente a sua interdependência. Identidades fixas não existem para serem respeitadas, mas sim para serem questionadas, descreditadas e, finalmente, obliteradas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Sobrevivência. América(s). Hibridismo.

INTRODUCTION: CANADA FIXED TO FLUIDITY

Some things can only be seen in the shadows. (Carlos Ruiz Zafón, *The Shadow of the Wind*, 2005, p. 6)

According to Marc Charron and Luise Von Flotow (2012, p. 121), “the understanding of cultural identity is central to the processes and products of translation in the Americas”. These “Americas”, as understood by these authors in their depiction of a literary bridge articulated between Canada and Brazil, goes way beyond the U.S. myopic scope, which calls itself and is still called “America” even though such words describe the whole continent. The emergence of such elaborations upon the concept of an American intercontinentality makes it compulsory for one to set forth a more careful approach towards the dimensions of alterity, hybridism, and deviating identities for the reflection upon what it is to be “American” – and to be part of America. Such label proves to be, in the end, paradoxically both granting and withdrawing spatial and temporal distinctiveness (depending on each case) to the subjects who supposedly belong within the boundaries of America. Hence the task undertaken within this study: to reflect upon contemporary debates concerning national identity, especially in what concerns the condition of Canada, as to find out how the idea of a fixed time and space might be destabilised. Atwood’s thematic guide *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972) provides me with the major theoretical framework for conducting such analysis, even though the conclusion whereto I get thereby is slightly different from hers.

As Octavio Paz (1981, p. 12) explains, even though fixity is desired and endeavoured to be rescued by those whose identity has been put in the line of fire, when it is indeed reached such “fixity is always momentary, and equilibrium at once precarious and perfect”. Everything thus lasts what would be close to the space of an instant, whereby the moment of meaning becomes also concomitantly a moment of

metamorphosis, and each moment of metamorphosis becomes, likewise, “succeeded by another moment of fixity, and succeeded by another change, another unexpected equilibrium, in which no one is alone, each change here bringing about another there” (PAZ, 1981, p. 10). Time, space, identity, reality: everything entails not stability and/or reinforcement – on the contrary, they all depend on changing continually. The changes never stop, they are just rearranged in a metamorphic array of events occurring sequentially and overlaying one another. In this confusing and complex cultural functioning, it is essential to take such ambivalent and multifaceted identity inconsistency into account when one tries to understand how cultures emerge, interact, and proliferate in the Americas. Since the cultural translations that allow such exchange to transgress national frontiers do never seem to be ever promoted innocently for such fluidity and/or fixity to arise by chance, nations surface out from a disputed arena. Identity is born and established through ideological battles; hence the difficulty to surviving.

I know. This issue of the conflict between identity fixity and identity fluidity is far from being a novelty, but many researches have both endorsed and disclaimed the idea of nation through the hybrid lenses of postmodernity. Translation, as a conceptual tool, might give us an opportunity to grasp the process of writing as amenable to jeopardise such identity ambivalence, nonetheless; to think less dualistically upon this matter means finding another way, looking for new perspectives. In this sense, my study relies on a hybrid and fragmentary approach to the idea of translating nations as a process that unveils the existence of meaning not in the text, context, author, or reader, but in the “in-betweeness” of the necessary interaction among them all. Nations are texts, those who integrate these nations are readers, and literature is therefore the subjective reality that emerges out from their experiencing their locale. The identity exchange wherein meaning travels within distinct realms can be implied when the artistic work, as signification, “comes into being through the synthesis of the polarities of work and my existence. When I enter and am entered by it, meaning emerges. Put in another way: the wholeness of the work exists in the relationship of convergence” (ITWARU, 1990, p. 143). Since meaning requires “convergence”, my hypothesis is that Canadian identity, thus, has never been fixed. It shall never be.

DISCUSSION: FIGHTING THE MONSTER

Throughout history, Canada has strongly been a victim of U.S.A. literary supremacy, much like every other country in America (in the case, Mexico and Canada seem to suffer greater influence from Uncle Sam, for simple geographic reasons).

Bearing that in mind, it is important to raise awareness to the fact that even though literature is a central piece for the development of national identity, Canadian successful literary pieces (the ones that are able to reach most readers and effectively compete with U.S.A. fiction) are generally innocuous. That is, as it happens in Brazil, successful literature is the one that gives its readers no critical possibilities – I dare say, with no hesitation: today, books that sell are books that do not offer its buyers opportunities to think. This creates a lack of national awareness, and results in an increase of peoples' admiration for other countries – which, on their turn, are more effective in asserting their identities. This is how we learn to deem U.S.A. and its culture as perfect and enviable. Other countries are just countries; and, gradually, everything that is English becomes analogous to everything that comes from the land of (no) opportunities.

This is particularly difficult to be handled in what regards Canadian culture and its future prospects due to the history of Canada as a former colony that has a strong relationship with European/English colonialism and subsequently American complicity in domination. Like most marginalised regions that have been colonised by Europe and are presently being neo-colonised by the U.S.A., Canada's fate is to struggle against traditions that do not allow deviations to occur; inevitably, any region facing such process is compelled to assume a position in the warzone, for the battle is already taking place. There are then two possibilities: either that of sanctioning and reinforcing the hegemonic epistemes, "which essentially corroborates the relations of imperialism with its race, gender and cultural discrimination" (SILVESTRE, 2008, p. 45), or striving for such systems of meaning to be questioned and ultimately altered. It is important to have in mind, nonetheless, that the latter might only take place through one's proposing inventive identity and cultural styles – that requires courage and ideals, things that I dare say we have been missing. Therefore, the surfacing of Canadian identity as responsible for allowing such inventive systems of meaning to respond to the hegemonic tradition is not a simple process; hence the necessity to ponder upon a hybrid survival instead of an autonomous one.

It is within the artistic sphere that hybridity as an identity possibility might be encountered and reified. Notwithstanding the postcolonial moment wherein Canadian voice is being allowed to be uttered with fewer restraints, one must take into account the emergence of the country's literature as responsible for giving rise to a brand-new polysystem of organised narratologies. In this sense, for the mistaken ideal of homogeneous identities within a national structure – as if invented frontiers were capable both to impose variations as well as to impede distinct ones to occur – the whole notion of identity needs to be reconsidered. What has to be taken into

account is the fact that when national identities are created they are turned into a sole reflection of other countries' identities; what the other becomes, in this sense, is what the self – a self whose given power is much larger – allows or needs it to be. For such process to effectively occur, several discursive variations are thus choked while just one of them is taken as a universal glimpse into the national identity of a region. The chosen variation is often the one that makes a nation closely associated to the ones which have already been given the necessary statuses – the hegemonic minority. Ultimately, subjects are convinced that there are not many paths for his/her nation to follow – only the one that has supposedly been constructed by its already extremely biased national identity. The exception becomes the prototype. This is why the culture and tradition of the coloniser, the comer, the hegemonic representative who so eagerly offers help and how he/she has defined and sentenced one's identity to be deemed, cannot be overlooked; one can only fight something s/he understands or considers amenable to be fought against. If you do not know who your enemy is, s/he might be mistakenly confused with a friend.

The emulation of European or U.S.A. literary or cultural styles is the easiest path for literary systems which are still facing the processes of formation. Even though that tradition is a rather assimilated one, that should not be the case whatsoever; this results in the continuation of a massive national erasure of marginal regions that are never given the chance to redefine themselves actively and originally in the globalising world map. Maps are not moulds; they are there to be written, and not to be filled in with predetermined material. A Canadian literary style, no matter how hybrid, is thus pivotal for the country to struggle against hegemonic imposed styles coming from Imperialist epistemes, and for it to develop its own stylistic configurations. Of course “there is the inaccurate belief that a preoccupation with style is inappropriate for a young, rough, and energetic culture” (KEITH, 1989, p. 14). This is so because style, so the argument runs, “belongs to an over-sophisticated, probably effete ‘high art’ and places a priority upon smoothness, polish, and even ‘elegance’, qualities allegedly alien to ‘the Canadian experience’” (KEITH, 1989, p. 15). The “Canadian experience”, nonetheless, might not be necessarily seen as alien to those cultures that have, in one way or another, touched, directly or superficially, the country's identity; nor is the notion of “style” directly related to the idea of elegance or “higher classes”.

It is important thus to be knowledgeable about those who exoticised Canadian literature and the Canadian experience and style, as to grasp their flair in order to produce and allow the evolution and emergence of a new one. John Metcalf, in *What is a Canadian Literature?*, argues that “the reader's final emotional response [...] can only be felt by someone with a refined knowledge of and honed skill in the

rules of the game" (1988, p. 51). What the author suggests here, as he shall later clarify, is that, in his view, "genuine depth of emotional response can only be achieved by those willing and able to immerse themselves in amazing artificiality – in language, in literary device, in rhetoric" (METCALF, 1988, p. 52). It is language, and the possibility of rhetoric, that allows the self to speak to the other, and that gives them a chance to freely externalise their communication to the rest of the world. It is thus this amazing artificiality that gives subjects the opportunity to transgress such artificiality – it is subjectivity that transforms the object. Therefore, the reader of Canadian literature has to be aware that such literature does not need to respond necessarily to a specific style of British, U.S.A., or any other Anglophone traditions. Canada shall surface from a brand new tradition, infected and transformed by its hybrid condition, but completely original in terms of how such blending is turned into a meaningful episteme. One is supposed to be eager to insert oneself within the singularity of that idiosyncratic artistic artificiality as to grasp its rhetoric functioning. The language of literature varies immensely and to very distinct levels; there is no hegemonic pattern for it to emerge – there are actually numberless.

This might look, I reckon, as a hegemonic and/or elitist view on the matter. Actually, nonetheless, understanding the other, not necessarily the "enemy", but any external observer, or understanding how the self has been otherised by the other, is not only important for comprehending who the other is; such knowledge is also essential for understanding who the self happens to be. "We cannot know who we are unless we know what our domestic and external relations actually were at different times in our history – the record of our social memory – and how these relations changed over time" (ITWARU, 1990, p. 22). The Canadian national unity is, after all, formed by both its internal and external relations and, thus, it is the record of Canadian social memory that might provide the country with the necessary knowledge to reposition itself in front of such record. It is the understanding of how the record has been recorded and has, thence, been functioning that proves to be fundamental for grasping the rules of the game which were once limited to the hegemonic agents but that becomes, consequently, available to anyone else. Acknowledgement is clearly not a synonym of compliance, inasmuch as "recognising your own tradition won't make you less critical; on the contrary, it ought to make you a better critic" (ATWOOD, 1972, p. 238). A consciousness-raising concerning the Canadian condition in the globe can only take place if one is capable of asking him/herself what is wrong, but this is only possible if s/he willingly attempts at understanding what is wrong and why:

In order to change any society, you have to have a fairly general consciousness of what is wrong – or at least that something is wrong – among the members of the society;

call it “consciousness-raising” if you like; and an examination of the effects of the situation on the heads of those in the society. Until you’ve done that, any efforts at change will be futile, because the society itself will not admit that anything’s wrong, that it should be changed. In other words: to fight the Monster, you have to know that there is a Monster, and what it is like (both in its external and internalised manifestations). I feel that Canadian writing has mostly been describing the Monster – and often describing it very well – and that’s a good thing. (ATWOOD, 1972, p. 147)

Here the author emphasises the importance of acknowledging the monster as a problem in order for the problem to be handled as properly as possible; trying to dodge the monster as if it would simply vanish is, thus, not advisable. If one stops to reflect upon the matter that to fight the monster you have to know that there is a monster, it is perhaps impossible not to reflect a little deeper upon this original analogy whereby the national imaginary imputed by Imperialism is compared to a monster haunting Canadian cultural and identity development. Atwood (1972, p. 148) herself explains the analogy better as she highlights that, when it goes to Canadian literature, “the problem facing all of us writers, insofar as we are concerned with this area of our experience, is: how to describe the Monster – in all its forms, including those in our heads – accurately and without being defeatist?” This is an interesting and intricate question, indeed, in need to be tackled by those who advocate in favour of the death of the monster. Again we return to the issue that, when a tradition is imposed unfairly but effectively, there is no use in trying to abandon, duck, or disregard such tradition; that is, for the question posed by Atwood (1972, p. 148) to be answered the other attempts at responding, no matter how imprecise, have also to be brought to light. Apropos, Atwood (1972, p. 149) seems to endorse such view when she declares: “I do not think minimizing the Monster, or castigating all those who have attempted the description, is the answer.”

Mitigating or disregarding a matter does not result in the disappearance of such matter, and it would be naïve to think so. In this sense, even those who have tried to kill the monster with the wrong weapons are useful for delineating the nature of the monster. It is only by scrutinising why and how they have done it that new epistemological structures for killing the monster might be ultimately allowed to arise; to get rid of the monster for good one has to know how it has been able survive for so long. Nevertheless, for understanding the monster and trying to fight it the path is not short nor straight; it is, on the contrary, a long and winding road – where obstacles might unexpectedly emerge at every second. For the colonial impact of the

hegemonic culture in Canada to be understood and tackled, many questions are still to be asked, and, as a result, several answers are still to be provided. As Atwood (1972, p. 150) suggests, “the answers are only in the process of being found; I don’t believe that they have been found, already. Nor do I think saying ‘Boo to Colonialism’ will make it go away.” Saying boo to Colonialism is very unlikely to result in its disappearance, indeed, and not because every nation which has been colonised is doomed to be a colony forever, but because colonialism, like a ghost, roams from the real to the unreal, from the palpable to the abstract, from the past to the future to haunt every nation imaginarily. Colonialism needs to be faced; not forgotten nor set aside – that is precisely how it tends to be maintained.

The conceptual identity that survives in the marginalised regions, as a result, inevitably mixes spatial and temporal embodiments of the colonial, neocolonial, and postcolonial, and ultimately confuses the Canadian attempt at (re)positioning itself in an evocative present. Some do not believe that any division between what Canada was, what it is, and what it might become would be proper for a clear definition of the nation’s identity to be proposed. In Atwood’s view (1972, p. 9), the Canadian history is a history “of the legacy of colonization, even though its history is a history of discovery of the country as a new home whose newness constantly calls forth the spectre of the past, the nostalgic replay of other geographies.” As an inevitable result, the Canadian legacy of colonisation produces a feeling of nostalgia for a past that has not necessarily taken place or that, when it has taken place, did not necessarily fade away completely in the present. Traditions are invented out of the blue, reinforced without proper reflection, and taken for granted during centuries to come.

It might seem dodgy to use such critique herein inasmuch as most of Atwood’s (1972) insights on Canadian literary identity are from the early 1970’s and can be deemed outdated or even obsolete, but I am rather certain this is far from being the case. The article written by Geneviève Richard in 2012 – forty years after Atwood’s (1972) book was published – called “Nature and National Identity: Contradictions in a Canadian Myth”, is a clear evidence of that. The answers that had not been found until the former piece was written are still obscure for the contemporary researcher on Canadian literary identity. The issue of national identity and the contributions literature might set forth during its concoction have, it seems, not stopped being a source for debate. The intricacy of the debate has not, on its turn, been simplified by more modern approaches to it (perhaps it has actually been even more problematised given the postmodern moment of our reflections upon any sort of identities). In the words of Richard (2012, p. 3), “Canadian identity is difficult to identify and many would argue, simply does not exist; this still leads one to question

whether or not there are contradictions in Canadian identity.”

My focus on the issue of national identity is, I hope, justifiable. I deem essential for such intricate concept to be tackled with sensitivity for the political space represented by national boundaries does not need to be an arena for pasteurizing the supposedly undesirable variations of cultural identities. In this sense, my review on Canadian national ideal is nothing but a step towards my attempt at deconstructing such idea of national frontiers – of a mythological structure for singular and specific cultural symbols that both create and are created by compatriot discourses. That is, it is first by bringing reflections regarding the idea of a concrete homeland and of the boundaries dividing national states that I might later liquefy such lands and ultimately transgress such imaginary boundaries. The myth of national universalisms and specificity – the illusion of the conflict of global versus regional spaces within the national milieu – serves the needs of those who take advantage from homogenising and erasing identity deviances. The concept of nation is a key political concept and, as such, exerts a structuring role for both designing, controlling, and setting aside discourses and subjects. The nation is the unit whereby those meanings which are deemed beneficial are given statuses and ranked accordingly – and whereby those meanings tendentiously regarded as useless in the terms of national interests (for whatever such interests might be) are directly put in quarantine.

Curiously (given her astuteness and acute intellect concerning innumerable issues within the political, social, and financial scopes), Margaret Atwood (1972) looks apparently oblivious to the harms of national universalisms of the kind that I attempt to problematise in this article – criticising her position would be nonetheless rather unfair giving the period when her thematic guide was written. The novelist attempts to provide a central symbol for national literary traditions, generalising national worries and simplifying a massive body of texts that go way beyond the limited cultural identity samples provided by her critique. In Atwood's (1972, p. 25) view, every country or culture has a single unifying and informing symbol at its core. “The symbol, then, functions like a system of beliefs which holds the country together and helps the people in it to co-operate for common ends”. Here she seems to endorse and give credit to the homogenising of national identities since she (mistakenly, in my view) confirms the existence of one singular evocative ideal that would be symbolic of each national identity construct. The nation would depend on such symbol for the country to be held together and for its people to cooperate for national interests – as if such interests could be standardised by the symbolic representation of every person simply because they were born or live within the same imaginary boundaries. This, as I see, endorses the maintenance of a problematic utopia: that of a pure and archetypal

national identity. Atwood (1972, p. 26) keeps up with her reflection, ultimately getting to what I see as an even more questionable conclusion when she poses that “the symbol for America is ‘the frontier’, a flexible idea that contains many elements dear to the American heart.” One should pay attention to the fact that when she refers to “America”, (Atwood 1972, p. 26) is actually talking specifically about the U.S.A. – which is actually quite surprising since she is very well known for criticising so vehemently U.S.A. assimilation of Canada. Notwithstanding her political activism, she fails to refer to Uncle Sam’s country without reinforcing its supremacy over the other nations of the continent.

Never mind. Atwood (1972, p. 26), as I was saying before, endeavours to illustrate how every nation has a symbol – being the symbol of U.S.A. the frontier, as if the whole tradition of U.S.A. literature addressed something related to such idea. Not satisfied with such illustration, she would later affirm that “the corresponding symbol for England is ‘the island’, convenient for obvious reasons” (ATWOOD, 1972, p. 27). Having defined what she understood as the symbolic representative of U.S.A. (the frontier), Atwood brings up the idea of the island to represent England – thereby offering another equally limited figure to stand for the meaning of another entire country. Her intention, the reason why she provides a symbolic image for the Anglophone literary identity of both U.S.A. and England, is to make her final point: to grant her understanding of what would be the identity symbol of Canadian literature. The central symbol for Canada, and this is supposedly based on numerous instances of its occurrence in both English and French Canadian literature, is, in her words, “undoubtedly Survival. Like ‘the frontier’ and ‘the island’, it is a multi-faceted and adaptable idea” (ATWOOD, 1972, p. 28). In Atwood’s opinion, therefore, if the frontier is the symbol of the U.S.A. and the island symbolises England, what would represent Canada – the whole country of Canada – is the idea of survival. The critic offers thus her final universalising and homogeneous representation for her entire nation, for a huge unit wherein several identities are encapsulated by a single symbol.

The argument is developed: this “survival”, supposedly symptomatic of all Canadian literature (an idea with which I strongly disagree), is a symbol which deserves, according to the critic, to be rethought due to its maleficent consequences. “A preoccupation with one’s survival is necessarily also a preoccupation with the obstacles to that survival” (ATWOOD, 1972, p. 27). Consequently, it is exactly the Canadians’ fear of these obstacles that would “become itself the obstacle; a character is paralyzed by terror (either of what he thinks is threatening him from the outside, or of elements in his own nature that threaten him from within)” (ATWOOD, 1972, p. 28). This has been detrimental to Canadian literary tradition; the idea of survival would have

made Canadian identity one which manifests the fright for going through risky but necessary experiences – detrimental to the whole experience of living. The argument makes sense – it is a pity it is not true. Atwood's (1972, p. 29) conclusion after her fallacious analysis of Canadian symbolic representation is that "when life becomes a threat to life, you have a moderately vicious circle. If a man feels he can survive only by amputating himself, turning himself into a cripple or a eunuch, what price survival?" That is what Canadian literature has allegedly been doing, in the novelist's view: amputating itself into something like a cripple or a eunuch – a thoroughly questionable conceptualisation, especially given the fact that it is based on an extremely debatable symbolic universalisation and homogenisation.

To produce, communicate, and reinforce such a communal definition of shared cultural identity is unquestionably a powerful device for such politically inflected differentiations playing the role of the global village ideal, simply because a national identity is itself testament to the power of the globalization of modernity. Nevertheless, if on the one hand globalisation has been the process whereby national identities have been shaped and institutionalised, it is also paradoxically the very mechanism that might allow subjects an opportunity to reposition themselves before such conceptualisations. "The very dynamic which established national identity as the most powerful cultural-political binding force of modernity may now be unravelling some of the skeins that tie us in securely to our national 'home'" (TOMLINSON, 1999, p. 274). Indeed, if globalising political and social methods have helped the national ideal to be conceived and maintained, if it was through the hegemonic usage of such method that the idea of the homogeneous nation came to be, what we need is a marginal approach towards it. Homogeneity might only open space for the entrance of more hybrid, deviating, and innovative conceptualisations on identity specificity if we stop looking for monsters that might simply not exist. In this sense, "the kernel of truth in the claim that national identity is also threatened by globalisation lies in the fact that the proliferation of identity positions may be producing challenges to the dominance of national identity" (TOMLINSON, 1999, 275). National identities, I assume, are a delusion, the materialisation of a need to share something particular and of universalising what is always inevitably local, a manifestation of subjects' problematic attempt to homogenise what is, unquestionably, inherently hybrid: ourselves.

FINAL REMARKS: A NEW COSMOPOLITAN THINKING

It would be a mistake to assume that the global citizen or those who are

here attempted to be jointed through the advent of an American intercontinentality – to the detriment of an American pure nation – should float free of attachment to the local. No one would ever be able to do that (nor should anyone try). The fluidity shared by postmodern subjects is not a synonym or evidence of our lack of attachment to the whole kit and caboodle; the contemporary moment actually marks the very opposite. The impression that we are not attached to any meaning is a common result of our inherent attachment to many of them. That is, our lack of dependence to a single identity is analogous to our identity interdependence. These hybrid and never-ending postmodern fragments that surface from the liquefied clothing of contemporary cosmopolitanism – an inevitable outcome of this era of mass transportation and migration whereto the cosmopolitan subject, wherever s/he is to get, is always heading or headed – are an evidence that time-space compression does not only concern economies, but actually any other thing. Moreover, notwithstanding the atmosphere of capital accumulation responsible for reminding us that we are global consumers, the cosmopolitan subject curiously surfaces also as a global producer, which requires a certain level of autonomy and activeness that is not often attributed to those who, for so long, have been seen as mere purchasers of that which they supposedly could never manufacture.

Furthermore, understanding the configuration of a heterogeneous and hybrid identity for Canada requires a vast comprehension concerning its past, and the past of other American spheres. Providing information on such past is not something to be looked at with despire, but to be taken as another attempt to give shape to a new cosmopolitan thinking. This “new cosmopolitan thinking is as concerned with how altered circumstances produce a new kind of world to live and work in as it is with trying to understand what kind of world that might be” (CRONIN, 2003, p. 10). Curiously, then, trying to delineate what shall be taken as a brand new cosmopolitan thinking would require anyone to understand past events as a pursuit to making out what kind of world we have been living in. That is, the past has to be tackled as for the present to be comprehended – and for the future to become tangible. “It is no secret that between the state’s articulation and the peoples whose labour it monopolises for its own perpetuation, there are major differences in perceptions” (ITWARU, 1990, p. 10). We are virtually taken once again to the ambivalence whereby the distinctive features of fantasy and reality are blended.

Between what the state and the subjects see there are major differences in perceptions. The attempt of each subject to problematise what the state has assumed to be the real national identity, and his/her possible following endeavour to suggest varying and fragmentary possibilities to replace such identity, impinge upon one another.

To put into question the whole issue of what is real and what is not in the national sphere, one needs to stop looking for a manner to universalise what is not liable to be captured and/or conceptualised. Nations do not exist to be domesticated; they are there to be broadened and reinvented continuously. What this means is that, in a way, these major differences in perceptions, also “call into question the state’s notion of reality, and reality as an invention in itself, a production amidst multiple productions in whose action resides the enigma of meaning” (ITWARU, 1990, p. 11). This meaning conundrum is one that has given critics much food for thought in what concerns this idea of reality as an invention in itself – that is, as fantastic as possibly any fantasy would be. The nation is an illusion, and its symbols are simply fake and amenable to being recycled whenever it is needed. I conclude my article therefore highlighting this debate regarding fantasy and reality – which illustrate rather well why America’s representation is in need to be re-presented. The parallels that might be drawn between the countries within the American continent, and their relevance and/or applicability to the understanding of one another, is an evidence of their interdependence. Fixed identities are never there to be respected; they exist to be questioned, discredited, and finally obliterated.

NOTES

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