

Patrick Imbert. *Comparer le Canada et les Amériques. Des racines aux réseaux transculturels*, Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2014, 275 p. ISBN: 978-2-7637-2370-9

Patrick Imbert's *Comparer le Canada et les Amériques. Des racines aux réseaux transculturels* is a nuanced and far-reaching monograph that renews the field of comparative cultural studies with regard to the relations between Canada, the United States, and Latin America. If most of the research related to the Americas adopts the European models of thought, this book displays the essential role of transcultural networks of knowledge beyond the idea of "roots", fundamental to Europe. Drawing on an impressive repertoire of scholarship in history, sociology, anthropology, and critical theory, as well as on literary analyses of contemporary writers, the monograph is deeply invested in engaging comparisons between European, Canadian, American, and Latin American concepts and practices – ranging from the invention of the Nation-State to the contemporary intercultural, multicultural and transcultural dynamics of the New World – that challenge the major 19th century paradigms: "extérieur/intérieur" and "barbarie/civilisation"(3), and the national metanarratives. More so than in a historical discourse, based on diachronic perspectives, Patrick Imbert – following the multiculturalism of Will Kymlicka, the Quebecois interculturalism by Gérard Bouchard, and the anthropological views of René Girard in *Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde* – interrogates the social, political, literary, and symbolic implications of the transgression of such dualisms as: inside/outside, sole alterity linked to Europe/multiple alterities in the Americas, long temporality/short temporality, frontier/frontière through the integration of new concepts like: "le tiers inclus" and "le caméléonage", along with the legitimacy of mobility and theories of multi and transculturalism.

The book consists of three long chapters, each comprising fifteen to twenty sub-chapters, to which annexes the conclusion, "Le surplus de savoir", and an extensive bibliography of twenty-six pages of critical and literary works – an excellent tool for research in the field. In the first chapter, "L'invention des États-nations et les paradigmes fondateurs: intérieur/extérieur synonyme de barbarie/civilisation", the author explores the stakes of passing from a dualistic identity to the acceptance of movement and the role of the "métissage des espaces" (58) in creating new forms of identity, more open to various encounters with the other/s. Here, Imbert breaks new ground in extending and consolidating a strain of violence theory emerging out of René Girard that inhere to "les rapports avec les peuples fondateurs" (72) in order to invite these peoples ("Autochtones, Noirs et Métis", 3) into diverse dynamics of belonging.

In this pursuit, in the second chapter, the author proposes several ways of escaping national metanarratives built on exclusion: "échapper au dualisme par le complexe" (79), "le rejet du nationalisme homogénéisant" (99), "les réincarnations", "l'hybridité" (112) and "le territoire bigarré" (127)... The analyses of literary pieces like: *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel, *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer* by Dany Laferrière, *The Law of Love* by Laura Esquivel, and *Myron* by Gore Vidal lead us to rethink the negative stereotypes related to the Americas – "la différence, le racisme, l'immigration" (48) – and turn them into creative processes of transformation of the self and the society, and into "dynamiques interculturelles, multiculturelles et transculturelles contemporaines" (139) – as we read in the third and last chapter.

Imbert's valuable contribution to the ongoing conversation about the role of alterity in theorizing transculturalism, multiculturalism, and interculturalism come in the form of the undertheorized concept of the transgression of duality, a term that symbolically signifies being inside or outside, belonging or being excluded, without having a third option. In Patrick Imbert's agile reflections, this third party ("le tiers inclus") signals the possibility to overcome the cause-

consequence structure of the narratives based on European models in order to value hazard and coincidences, which characterize the realities of the New World. In his last chapter, the author brings critical acuity to both the patterns of the old world (“le canon historique”, “la causalité”, “la durée longue”) and the various approaches of the Americas (“le multiculturel”, “l’instant”, “la sémiotique du transculturel”). The latter – compelling in life experiences and in aesthetic representations – also involves the notion of “la citoyenneté transculturelle” (139), by involving the desire of inclusion and the transgression of limiting dichotomies. The works of Pico Iyer on multiculturalism and global mobility engender what Imbert views as genuinely creative strategies to subvert static codes, behaviors and practices (“le statisme”, 224).

Here, the author brings the term “cooperation multiple et efficace” (183) into focus as a possible way of going beyond antagonistic dualistic relations. In contrast to European national metanarratives, Imbert advocates for a notion of creativity that emerges out of and impacts the dynamic of sharing knowledge and expertise (“le partage”, 238). In conclusion, Imbert considers the context of the global world, which frames postcolonial/inter-multi-transcultural ways of thinking to show that cultural exchanges are not only based on past experiences and expertise, but also oriented towards the future through positive encounters and sharing: “dans une optique transculturelle, la culture n’est pas un ensemble d’éléments tournés vers le passé. Elle est ce qui favorise la rencontre des groupes et des individus par le partage” (238).

Researchers and readers fond of transculturalism will find in Patrick Imbert’s *Comparer le Canada et les Amériques. Des racines aux réseaux transculturels* a rich panorama and captivating discussion of comparative cultural studies related to the Americas from the 19th century up to the present day. There is, in all of the monograph, an intellectual and creative tension at play between critique as a philosophical-poetic discourse for probing conditions of possibility and criticism as a strategy geared towards solving deeply ingrained societal problems. Patrick Imbert indeed delivers a worthy reflection on the passage from “racines aux réseaux transculturels” related to the Americas.

Adina Balint
University of Winnipeg