

# The invention of the Americas: from barbarism/civilization to indolence/work

*A invenção das Américas: de barbarismo/civilização a indolência/trabalho*

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**Abstract:** The goal is to establish a short list of paradigms which can help compare literary and political texts produced in the Americas without necessarily referring to Europe. In this article, although there are many more such as territorial logic/logic of the knowledge-based society, to resolve contradictions/not to resolve contradictions, stable identity/multiple images of the self, we focus on four of them: barbarism/civilization, indolence/work, paganism/christianity, order/disorder. They are linked to the invention of nations in the Americas. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they mutate into a continuum valorizing flux, dynamism and encounter. In this case, they introduce us to a perspective linked to multicultural thinking instead of disseminating exclusion.

**Keywords:** Paradigms; Americas; Barbarism/Civilization; Multiculturalism

**Resumo:** O objetivo deste artigo consiste em apresentar uma breve lista de paradigmas que podem ajudar a comparar textos literários e políticos produzidos nas Américas, sem necessariamente estabelecer referências com a Europa. Embora haja muitos outros possíveis – tais como a lógica territorial e a das sociedades baseadas no conhecimento, a resolução das contradições ou não resolução, identidade estável/múltiplas identidades do self –, focalizamos neste artigo somente quatro desses paradigmas: barbarismo/civilização, indolência/trabalho, paganismo/cristianismo, ordem/desordem. Eles estão ligados à invenção das nações nas Américas. No final do século XX, tais relações se transformam em um fluxo contínuo de valorização, dinamismo e encontro. Nesse caso, eles nos introduzem em uma perspectiva ligada ao pensamento multicultural em vez da disseminação da exclusão.

**Palavras-chave:** Paradigmas; Américas; Barbarismo/Civilização; Multiculturalismo

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## Introduction

European writing or comparisons between Europe and the Americas have recently dominated comparative research. Nonetheless, we discover new parallels between nations in gestation at the antipodes of the North American continent when we realize that similar circumstances helped shape them. For instance, Canada, Argentina and Venezuela<sup>1</sup> have all felt the weight of England's might, of its financial and technological know-how, and of its economic presence (DOCOLA, 1995).

Moreover, numerous thinkers have sought to invent national identity (ANDERSON, 1991) and to differentiate themselves from Europe while attempting to develop a liberal discourse open to the promotion of economic development. This invention of identity was linked to the ideals of the American Revolution and especially to Horace Mann's educational practices in Massachusetts (COUILLARD, IMBERT, 1997), which direct influence extended as far as Argentina.

We will focus here on paradigms in place from one end of the continent to the other. In the Americas, most of these paradigms are mentioned implicitly or explicitly by writers, thinkers and artists, from *Facundo* by Sarmiento to *Imagining Canada* by Pico Iyer, from the *American Scholar* by Emerson to *Le Siècle de Jeanne* by Yvon Rivard, or from *Philosophy of Railroads* by Keefer to *La Globalización imaginada* by García Canclini.

<sup>1</sup> Mario Briceño-Iragorry, in *Mensaje sin destino*, recalls the fascination generated by another form of globalization from England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: "Juan José Churrion, a writer noted for his happy disposition, reached the point where he actually began to seriously consider the benefits we would supposedly have derived if Walter Raleigh had conquered Venezuela." (p. 65).

However, some of these paradigms are more basic than others. Hence, we will focus on barbarity/civilisation and its connection to indolence/work and to order/disorder. These paradigms are linked to the more general one, interior/exterior synonymous with self/others. The last one we will consider, in the context of the nineteenth century, which will be our main focus here, is linked to Christianity/paganism. However, there are many more important paradigms to explore. In the book entitled *Comparer le Canada et les Amériques: des racines aux réseaux transculturels* (IMBERT, 2014), an analysis covering three centuries focuses on the following paradigms: single alterity linked to Europe/multiple alterities in the Americas, long temporality/short temporality/instant, past/future, continuity/discontinuity, coincidence/causality, simultaneity/historicity, purity/mestisaje/hybridity/creolity, *frontier*/border<sup>2</sup>, protection/encounter, zero sum game/non-zero sum game (IMBERT, 2013), fact/promise, territorial logic/logic of the knowledge-based society, to belong to oneself/to belong, to resolve contradictions/not to resolve contradictions, stable identity/multiple images of the self, statism/nomadism, bastard/orphan, to create/to generate, homogeneity/relationality. In the evolution from the 19th century to the 21 century, these paradigms are modified. The dualistic opposition tends to dissolve into a continuum leading identities to multiple images of self linked to a positive image of the chameleon<sup>3</sup>. These transformations are linked to glocalisation and to new conceptions theorizing how to manage encounters through inter-multi or transcultural approaches. Hence, in this article, we will show that barbarism/civilization and indolence/work were watchwords of the new discourse and ideology of progress, inscribed as they were in the ideals and practices of the Age of Reason transferred to a “virgin” continent where nations were invented. We will look at the ways this transfer resulted in successes or in processes very similar from one country to the next.

## 1 From the French/foreigner paradigm to civilization/barbarism

The French Revolution, with its universalistic impulse, attempted to break the dualistic opposition

of French/Foreigner to substitute in its stead civilized humanity vs. savagery or civilization/barbarism (WAHNICH, 1997). The old world regime was based on with the first paradigm Christianity vs. paganism, while the new one embraced new ideals of freedom, progress and production linked to barbarism/civilization. There was an ancient form of barbarism on one side of the equation, and on the other side, the new world’s pre-capitalist or capitalist bourgeoisie with its new conception of barbarism.

The barbarism/civilization paradigm thus sprang directly out of the disruption of the Christian world by the Age of Reason’s hierarchical organization of society in function of its ability to embrace progress and reason as defined by European intellectual elites. Because of this, as we will see with Étienne Parent, a French Canadian writer and politician, the Catholic church was gradually forced to make peace with these new paradigms that it could not completely control, even while it entrenched its hold on certain social sectors such as Education because the country had to progress and develop its economic elite.

In Argentina, Sarmiento first a writer then the President of the Republic after the overthrow of dictator Rosas, literally plunged himself into this paradigm and used it as the thematic basis for his essay *Facundo* (CASTILLO DURANTE, 2009). Evidently, we must not suppose that all writers shared his outlook. A traditional aristocrat such as Juan Manso de Noronha argued in *Los misterios de la Plata* that life in cities was bad and that all the American cities he visited were terrible. Another writer, Mansilla, evoked in *Una excursión a los Indios Ranqueles* that an Ageing Europe remained convinced it was young and evolving, while it was actually living in ignorance (p. 51). For Sarmiento, however, barbarism was located in the backcountry of the gauchos and caudillos, of the Indians and the deserts, while civilization was centred in Buenos Aires, with its European liberal influences.

This may all seem quite different from the situation in French Canada, but we must nuance any distinctions we draw. In fact, for liberals, a European form of liberalism was the very model of development and progress, the epitome of civilization. In French Canada, we must draw a distinction between red liberals like Arthur Buies or the Doutré brothers, influenced by an anti-clerical voltairianism, and economic liberals like Parent. These latter took inspiration from English liberals, and the United States’ pragmatism fascinated them. These liberals will concern us here, because they were attached to a view of the continent and of development that corresponds to that of many countries in the Americas, most notably in Sarmiento’s writing.

<sup>2</sup> One has to realize that in English the frontier is an open space without limits. Its meaning is completely different from the French word *frontière*. A meaning similar to the English word can be found in some parts of the Americas: “Históricamente, la tenencia de la tierra era más amplia en Costa Rica y hasta hace poco una frontera agrícola daba la posibilidad de colonizar nuevas tierras”. Bridget Hayden, *Salvadoreños en Costa Rica: Vidas desplazadas*, San José, Universidad de Costa Rica, 2005, p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> This dynamic is active in different parts of the world as we can see in the following article: Sirkka Remes, “La stratégie identitaire du caméléon dans *Zelig* de Woody Allen et *Maktoub* de Gilles Zenou”, *Nouvelles études francophones*, v. 29, n. 1, p. 42-56, printemps 2014.

## 2 Paganism/Christianity

While certain newspapers and many Canadian Institute conference papers manifested Liberal positions, literature did not, adopting very early instead an opposing view in the ideological debate. In literature, Patrice Lacombe and especially Duquet, abbot Racine, Monseigneur Bourget the Archbishop of Montreal, or Beaudry in *Le conseiller du peuple* asserted that a society where religion had nothing to do with politics was barbaric: “*Mais cette doctrine est affreuse et fait retomber la société dans la barbarie d’où le christianisme l’a tirée*” (BEAUDRY, 1861, p. 72). The challenges are clear. Without religion, paganism takes over and nothing will do to remedy it, neither science, nor philosophy: “*La science, l’instruction, la philosophie ne sont pas un antidote contre la barbarie, témoin Rome ancienne et ses savants*” (ibid, p. 157). This idea is similar to an influential tendency within French Canada, that of Gaumism which rejects the Classical Humanities in an attempt to impose a Christian, Latin curriculum taught by church fathers. Immediately, a new identity is created which escapes barbaric Europe, as shown in *La terre paternelle*:

*Laissons aux vieux pays, que la civilisation a gâtés, leurs romans ensanglantés, peignons l’enfant du sol, tel qu’il est, religieux, honnête, paisible de moeurs et de caractère, jouissant de l’aisance et de la fortune sans orgueil et sans ostentation, supportant avec résignation et patience les plus grandes adversités...* (p. 118).

A Venezuelan, F. Toro, also emphasized the impotence of knowledge in relation to ethics and to a capacity to forge new social links in a slightly more liberal outlook, but one focused on American nationalism: *La paz, la lay, la ciencia, el arte, sirven para llevar a una clase a la cumbre del poder humano, y para precipitar a otra en un abismo de miseria y perdición* (*Europa y América*, p. 54).

## 3. Who is the barbarian?

F. Toro further reminds us that Europeans considered the inhabitants of the Americas semi-barbaric. The prevailing perception in Europe was based on the beliefs of English merchants, as Mariano Moreno, an Argentinean scholar of Free Trade said in 1809 “*un general concepto de nuestra barbarie*” (IRAZUSTA, 1963, p. 23). This view was held at the very time of the massacres of the Napoleonic wars. This confirms what colonialists such as E.G. Wakefield (1834) said. For him, Anglo-Saxons are civilized while all others are savages:

If they (the Dutch colonies of South Africa) had not obtained some slaves, that is, some combination

of labour in the particular works of their farms, they would, being so scattered, and prevented from combining their own labour, have degenerated into the state of those savage descendants of Spaniards who inhabit the plains of Buenos Ayres (*England and America*, p. 264).

Sarmiento situated himself squarely in this use of the paradigm, except that he applied it to the backcountry, because according to him the bourgeoisie in port cities was directly plugged into European civilisation. Certain parts of *Facundo* therefore portrayed the landscape of the *pampas* as a desert evocative of those the Bedouins roamed in the East<sup>4</sup>. The liberal French monarchist Xavier Marmier adopted this view during his travels from Canada to Rio de la Plata, in his *Lettres sur l’Amérique* (1852) in which he followed Sarmiento’s lead on this topic, to the last detail. We cannot help but compare these representations with those of *L’influence d’un livre* by Philippe Aubert de Gaspé Fils (1837). The romanticism of the novel is full of literary allusions, to the point of comparing the forest in the Montreal area to Arabian sands:

[...] *près de la Baie-Saint-Paul, le cap au Corbeau. Ce cap a quelque chose de majestueux et de lugubre. À quelque distance on le prendrait pour un de ces immenses tombeaux jetés au milieu des déserts de l’Égypte par la folle vanité de quelque chétif mortel* (p. 74).

The backcountry thus became the site of barbarism, clearly demonstrating how European codes could not manage the whole of the continent with its vast geographic reaches and its partially intermixed population. It is partly what happened in Sarmiento’s work when he found himself trapped in European discourse. In response, he made an essentialist reading of the dictator Rosas, who came from the country’s interior. Sarmiento did not, however, include the identity aspirations of backcountry people that he simply discounted and ignored. He rejected the rest of the country in his construction of Buenos Aires as a port city with a concentrated power and a European orientation.

Consequently, European influences constructed a so-called natural space, but above all a socio-discursive space that actually uncovered barbarism, because it usefully legitimated intentions in a paradigm linked to progress. This was particularly true when it was used to legitimate the rejection of intermixing<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibn Khaldûn argued that the Bedouins were nomadic enemies of cities, civilization, and writing.

<sup>5</sup> This situation is analyzed in our times by Hernando de Soto, the apostle of informal small business: “The surrounding desert and hills have ceased

## 4 Progress

The word progress was essential to all evolutionary ideals because it established that all peoples lived in a natural state, as Hobbes asserted, or in a state of every man for himself, but also that man acceded to a higher state of civility through his faculty of reason. The problem was that certain societies had already attained this state of civilization, modelled in the French Revolution, while others had not. The solution to this dilemma was simple: those societies whose customs were foreign were considered irrational. The unknown other was attributed (IMBERT, 1995) the label “savage”. Condorcet was convinced that the French Revolution had produced the most perfect world order. The utopia of reason necessitated the establishment of particular associations between races and cultures or between customs and geographical features and forced the establishment of antitheses that explained the logic of difference and hierarchy amongst cultures (HARRIS, 1987).

This rational process led to the denial of the territorial ties of Aboriginal peoples, because they were barbarians. From the beginning, the nation states of the Americas did everything in their power to separate the territory from pre-existing meanings, in order to promote an exclusive and dualistic notion of progress. To this end they spread a vision, as we have seen, that confirmed space as desert-like, or that asserted the Aboriginal peoples were directly linked to nature and therefore not humans with their own history. In a complementary move, they established close ties between territory and the declaration of independence, then between territory and the constitution. The preamble to the Argentinean constitution says: “*para nosotros, para nuestra posteridad y para todos los hombres del mundo que quieran habitar en el suelo argentino*” (for us, for our posterity, and for all men of the world who desire a life on Argentinean soil); in the 14<sup>th</sup> section of the role it assigns congress, the Argentinean constitution declares: “*Arreglar definitivamente los limites del territorio de la Nación, fijar los de las provincias, crear otras nuevas*” (clearly define the nation’s territory, demarcate the boundaries of the provinces, and create new ones).

Territory and meaning, space and symbolism are elements that work in concert for a triumphant form of modernity represented by civilized peoples who worked to validate the new geographic and symbolic space, while relegating others to the margins.

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to be a passive landscape and themselves become part of the city, and the city’s European style has yielded to a noisy, tawny skinned personality. (Peru) But the cities have also conferred individuality on their inhabitants. Individual effort has come to predominate over collective effort” (*The Other Path*, p. 3).

## 5 The United States and the Americas

In Argentina, the functioning of this paradigm arose from the country’s will to affirm a particular identity when faced with a Europe initially perceived as civilized. The ideal later disappointed Sarmiento when he was confronted with the abject misery of Europe’s peasant and working class populations. The discourse of European civilization and the discourse of a principality that nourished European nationalism’s expansionist aims did not hold when faced with social and economic practices where freedom lost itself in materialism and in the functioning of strong regimes. Sarmiento was left to turn towards the United States as did a number of liberal French Canadians (BOUCHARD, LAMONDE, 1995), as the most civilized nation in the world:

Still, after examining the chief nations of Christendom, I have come to the conclusion that the Americans are the only really cultured people that exist on this earth and the last word in modern civilization (M.-A. Rockland, *Sarmiento’s Travels in the United States in 1847*, p. 151)

In fact, the United States had succeeded in applying a certain ideal, in forging a practice, and had succeeded in the triumphant integration of immigrants from all nations. The old French/Foreigner paradigm was erased in part by that of revolutionary progressivism, bourgeois and pragmatic barbarism/civilization. This pushed Sarmiento to import a system of education and to copy the example of Massachusetts’ educator Horace Mann, praised also in Canada by Judge Mondelet, whose important texts have largely been ignored by the critics (COUILLARD, IMBERT, 1997).

## 6 Time

The vogue of the barbarism/civilization paradigm, namely that of stabilized binary oppositions linked to territory have the advantage of not considering time. Once one begins to think of time, one is forced to admit the impossibility of static identification. One must then accept the contingency and uncertainty suppressed in modernity (and yet greatly resurging in postmodernity), and seriously envisage a relationship to the other, the question of difference and acknowledge an encounter with *métissage* and change. Through the use of these simplifying paradigms, and of clichés like “child of the soil” in French Canada, we engage in a simple metalanguage that is meant to represent the world, and that conceals its organizing praxis (DE CERTEAU 1987, p. 71) as well as the fact that identity is a social product (MATO, 1998). We thus block reflection and

impose a way of thinking, which tries to rediscover what it has already posited as a premise. The access to history, and to the multiple views is refused at once by priests and by a deterministic, positivist ideology. This epistemological violence will not be questioned by Sarmiento until after 1847, notably after his journey in Europe, the United States and Canada. Canada will be partially deterred from some of her essentialism by Parent, notably in his speech at the Canadian Institute in 1846 and in that concerning the work of 1847. These dates coincide in both writers. The dates also manifest a change in the advance of modernity that had to include a more flexible mode of functioning and an approach that integrated a mode of thought adapted to its context, adapted to movement overcoming the rigidity of dualistic paradigms. Economic and technical progress and industrial and capitalist development required it. There was also an emerging shift in scholastic thought. From this standpoint, we recall Étienne Parent's presentations at the Canadian Institute. He disengaged in his talks from the antitheses that tripped up Sarmiento and the Canadian clergy, who had attributed oppositional values to landscapes (Pampas=barbarism/cities=civilization for Sarmiento and villages=civilization/ cities=barbarism for Canadian clergy). His speeches made him representative of an evolving line of thought that took the past as well as the future into account, by forging transitional links that imposed longer term thinking, and by establishing a continuity that led to dynamic, qualitative shifts:

[L'industriel] est le père de l'Amérique civilisée.. Ce sont des cités sans nombre et des empires que l'industriel a conquis sur la nature sauvage, non plus avec l'épée et le sang d'autres hommes mais bien avec la hache et les sueurs de son propre front (Discours prononcés par Étienne Parent devant l'Institut canadien de Montréal le 22 janvier 1846, p. 19).

Parent's art was, however, to present an analogy: the farmer working to improve his land used new techniques the way an industrialist would. In Parent's view, the farmer, unlike what the clergy says about him (see also *Jean Rivard économiste* by Gérin-Lajoie (MAJOR, 1991)), does not blindly repeat the same actions over centuries. Through this process of attribution, Parent transformed the farmer into the motor of progress that founded cities according to the United States' model. He inscribed it therefore in the larger epic of industrialization and progress. This was a radical change in the portrayal of French Canadians, because space was no longer divided for Parent between city and country. In his view, the city arose from pre-capitalist development and subscribed to an evolutionary dynamic where identity modified imperceptibly to represent the apex of civilization.

## 7 Indolence/work

It is nonetheless important to grasp the fact that the opposition between barbarism and civilization rested on another fundamental dualism that deconstructed the very foundations of Christian civilization and of the Bible: namely its conceptions of indolence and the nature of work. At this level, Sarmiento's and Parent's comments met and resembled one another, because each was very much a man of his time, that is to say, each man's liberalism was economic, above all, and helped to invent the Americas.

The deserts of civilizable America, mentioned by Guizot, as Sarmiento said in his novel *Facundo* gave rise to barbarians who left the land in its wild state. Why are these peoples termed 'barbarian'? Because they refuse to WORK, Étienne Parent argued:

*L'incorporation des indigènes pratiquée par les colonisateurs doit avoir contribué grandement à produire ce résultat malheureux (l'oisiveté, l'inaptitude à l'industrie). Les races américaines vivent dans l'oisiveté et se maintiennent incapables de se livrer à un travail pénible et suivi même par la contrainte. C'est ce qui a suggéré l'idée d'introduire des nègres en Amérique, idée qui a produit de si fatals résultats. Mais la race espagnole ne s'est pas montrée mieux douée pour l'action quand elle s'est vue dans les déserts d'Amérique abandonnée à ses propres instincts (p. 37).*

What François Xavier Garneau says in his History of Canada in 1845 is not different. Étienne Parent added to the construction when he clearly asserted: "L'Europe est chargée de castes fainéantes... Pauvre Espagne qui ne doit le reste de vie qui la soutient encore qu'à son ciel si beau, à son sol si riche" (*Du travail chez l'homme*, 23 septembre 1847, p. 67).

*Le sauvage d'Amérique a pris nos vices et laissé de côté nos vertus, il a pris ce qui fait notre faiblesse et négligé ce qui fait notre force, le travail et les idées de la civilisation. Le sauvage pense comme nos nobles au sujet du travail et le tient en mépris (Du travail chez l'homme, 23 septembre 1847, p. 76).*

He could not be clearer. The lazy ones, and in particular, the indolent noble castes, were the contemporary barbarians, because they held to a world of expenditure and frequently to mutual destruction with weapons. Very rapidly, this new paradigm of indolence vs. work, dependant on barbarism/civilization served to exclude those who were considered neither producers nor landowners: "Et les sauvages ne restent sauvages que parce qu'ils ne développent pas assez les lois de la

*propriété.*” (Lamartine, *Le conseiller du peuple*, 1849-1851, v. 1, p. 26).

Sarmiento and Parent were therefore quite controlled by their new paradigm, one larger than, but just as dualistic as the one preceding it. Their paradigm nonetheless overcame national or local distinctions to open collectives to the West and to open the world towards Westernization. It also notably promoted the United States’ revolutionary idea of compensation for work, coupled with the universal right to property. Land surveying and redistribution indicated the territory was no longer considered a desert but a source of riches. The revolution was also based on the fact of conferring legal title as H. de Soto illustrates in regard to Latin America (1990). The new world order of the period embraced production and free trade in a dynamic that permitted identity redefinition.

The new world order, in French Canada, however, remained in strong confrontation to the old world’s Christian regime, whereby nobility had been transformed into a farming class, as *Le petit Albert* attempted to show. The next step was to escape natural indolence and to become productive. The nobles were therefore like the Indians, people who refused to produce and content to live as parasites on the environmental and social scene. There was of course a major difference between them, because the nobles were born indolent, whereas the Indians were at least seen as living in harmony with nature. Viewing the Aboriginal as incapable of integration into the rhythm of progress only served to aggravate the attribution process defining them as barbarians. Their barbarism stemmed from the fact that they were not landowners and were not working which permitted liberals and positivists along with conservative or non-conservative Christians to repulse them, to dispossess them, to attempt to enslave them, to assassinate them and to seize their lands to develop farming, livestock production, forestry.

No one obviously, openly claimed that the newly indolent were the rich members of the capitalist class as Paul Lafargue, the French anarchist argued in *Le droit à la paresse* (p. 47). Entrepreneurs were instead seen as organizers, builders, unifiers that contributed through their energy and promotion of the continent (BERTON, 1989). In French Canada, the history built around these two dualistic paradigms of barbarism /civilization and indolence/work, the struggle takes place between the paradigms of the ultramontane church and of the practical economism that will soon dominate daily life.

## 8 Order

Christian thinkers argued that they tamed nobility’s military power, and forced it to exchange the sword for the plough. This idealized view corresponded at least to

Canada, where the aristocrat was not so much a warrior as an absentee landlord. The underlying question, once again, was conformity to a biblical version of connection to the land, the Adam myth, whereby he who springs from the earth is connected to it indelibly. This entirely overlooked the question of ownership of the land. Parent was very conscious that he was up against the church and these myths, swimming in “murky waters”. He was forced to be diplomatic with his speech, to manage sensibilities, especially because the seigniorial system was not yet abolished in Canada. He therefore often proceeded by suggestion rather than by open assertion: “*Et s’il est arrivé quelquefois que la barbarie l’ait emporté sur la civilisation, c’est que la civilisation s’est endormie dans l’oisiveté, mère de tous les vices*” (*Du travail chez l’homme*, p.58). How could one disagree with such a phrase, when its scope was so general as to indicate no basic conflict between manners of speech? Barbarism, indolence and civilization were terms to which each reader could confer meaning, without recognizing their polysemic nature. The reader needn’t envisage that others might have ideological backgrounds that were completely opposite.

## 9 Work is freedom

Despite all, Parent pointedly demonstrated a complete reversal in Christian paradigms. For him, the cliché “You’ll work by the sweat of your brow” was no longer valid. Work was not a condemnation to slave labour, but rather the very foundation of freedom: “*Ainsi les peuples les plus industriels furent-ils presque toujours les plus libres.*” (p. 61) This statement is interesting, because it neatly approaches a paradoxical and complete reversal of the Biblical paradigm. In fact, Parent clearly stated WORK IS FREEDOM. One must however distinguish the context within which the text was written, as Parent was a master of context. His expression tended to construct a society that refused slavery and adopted the abolitionists’ arguments (even if slavery apparently no longer existed at that time in Canada). He refuted servility and everything that resembled it, namely a submissive relationship to the glebe or to the established order. To this end, he reworked discourse to produce a text that linked work to freedom, or to personal well-being. His mode of expression transformed the reception of the word ‘work’ from its prior connotation of hardship. The word’s meaning shifts for those Europeans still suffering from exploitation at the hands of a feudal and ecclesiastical juggernaut that turned leisure time into a prison of miserable working conditions imposed by the liberal and capitalist bourgeoisie. A new discourse was constructed, one that linked work, freedom, the individual and civilization in production and

in exchange, as the new means to build a great human fraternity. Parent wanted humans free and masters of their own destinies, because nature, as Locke said, created them that way. Progress was assured with the help of paradigms that counter ultramontane catholic paradigms, without an open attack. Barbarism/civilization was therefore large enough to contain paganism/Christianity and indolence/work.

## 10 Competing paradigms

This is clearly why Parent, only too aware of the enormous presence of the clergy in French Canada, as well as of a necessary and inescapable economic practice, admirably managed to include a rejection of work as eternal damnation out of respect to Rome's power:

*Mais l'Amérique un jour s'est levée avec ses jeunes et vigoureuses populations présentant au monde un autre Dieu, le Dieu des hommes libres, le Dieu des travailleurs... Et aujourd'hui vous voyez Rome, cette maîtresse du monde politique ancien, comme elle est devenue la reine du monde religieux moderne. Vous voyez Rome sous les auspices d'un pontife éclairé préparer les voies à l'intronisation du nouveau Dieu... Sainte et salutaire alliance avec la religion (Du travail chez l'homme, p. 71)*

This enthusiastic style with its lyrical tendencies can also be found in certain *Mandements* by Monseigneur Bourget. It manifests the increasingly pronounced dominance of liberal pragmatism, inscribed within the economic and technological with which the church must accommodate itself so that the economic machine can run smoothly. It demonstrates how Parent must ally itself with the church in order to turn the wheels of the economic machine. This liberalism, quite different from red liberalism inspired by voltairian anticlericalism needed political and symbolic power to expand its influence. The uneasy alliance consequently works despite the incommensurability of the paradigms and their profound philosophical oppositions. In fact, for liberalism, work is equal to freedom, optimism, material enrichment, industry and responsibility. For Catholicism, practice and work were nearly a malediction, because spiritual richness had to be attained for the next world through submission to authority in this one. A double standard was enacted in the blurring of two systems that in theory at least should not be able to function together. A whole society thus became bi-cultural. This was in fact one of modernity's primary contributions. In the whole of the western world, in addition to the rise of industry and new technologies, democratization generated a type of double culture, one simultaneously static and dynamic. This process geared

down and then reasserted itself even more strongly during the postmodern/postcolonial period (IMBERT, RIZZO, 2000).

## 11 Order/disorder

A more fundamental paradigm was in place, however, one that determined the contradictions of the opposed pair order/disorder. It reigned over the entire century, and in particular over those leaders who wished to establish new identities by organizing as rapidly as possible a profit system that benefitted their social class. This was similar to South America's situation, where eminent liberators like San Martín or Bolívar dreamt occasionally of a European-style constitutional monarchy or of a monarchy, ideas far removed from the people whose republican tendencies focused on an American landscape.

In Étienne Parent's case, we can say that his September 1846 speech coincided with his appointment as Provincial under-secretary and with his gradual departure from his usual tendencies for the timid first steps towards radical liberalism. He belonged to that class of bureaucrats that graduated from classical colleges to pursue their destinies in Lower Canada, by cooperating with English financiers, Francophone entrepreneurs and the clergy. He enacted a dynamic close to the Protestant work ethic Weber defined at the end of the century, that held sway in a large part of South America, as Argentinean General Mitre pointed out (1893, p. 21).

Moreover, like all liberals, Parent sought a strong Church presence, one exercising a moralizing role, ruling through transcendent ethics, and through exchanges between producers, because without the confidence ethics fostered, the economy was in peril. C. Darwin reminded his readers of the dangers pertaining to the Rio de la Plata where it was easy to bribe any of the poorly paid civil servants (*Un naturalista en el Plata*, p. 132).

Barbarism/civilization are therefore words that contain concealed others. The essential paradigm of indolence/work led to an order that modified the definition of freedom. This freedom was in fact surplus spending based on the exploitation of others, an individual production guaranteeing the means, not of subsistence, but of development and continuous enrichment. *Noblesse oblige* fell into obsolescence, *richesse oblige* became the new norm, as regarded the validation and increase of the fortune for the good of everyone in a civilized world that no longer rested on a zero-sum game (GILDER, 1981). This meant that the world was no longer a given, with its fruits consumed on the basis of a limited quantity of resources, but that it was possible to increase riches through work. Parent and Sarmiento agreed, even if they located barbarism in different places, based on their

differing eras. Barbarism, however, like hell (that of the exploitation of workers in Europe), is not a location. According to an American identity that Étienne Parent helped to render more precisely, barbarism could be no more than a situation, that of a variety of diverse social groups that could not function harmoniously within a social practice referring to new ideological paradigms. For Sarmiento and Parent, confining oneself to a pre-industrial form of agriculture was a descent into barbarism, because it would fail to embrace the progressive originality of the Americas, and the aim to democratize the right to property, based on flourishing individual rights.

## 12 Originality and practice

Hence the paradigms of barbarism/civilization linked to a way of being had to be surpassed by those of work+freedom/indolence+oppression. These latter became a praxis, because their originality was in their application. And application is linked to the Americas. In fact, the theories are European, as Fermin Toro argued for the United States, pointing out that Americans did not invent parliamentarism, nor the jury process, but that they took up pre-existing notions and reapplied them, with improvements. Sarmiento also wrote in his travel journal that Americans technically improved their products (ROCKLAND, 1970, p. 139). Originality lay therefore in the application, in the adaptation to a social context, to an immense landscape, to important resources.

However Sarmiento believed that he read the definitive reality of American society just as he believed in the reality of the European text. The same was true for a number of French Canadian liberals who read liberal ideas through Catholic eyes, that is, with a view to a truth that could be replicated. All demonstrated a problem with representation and did not fully grasp how the Americas were undergoing a decompartmentalization in point of view that expanded vision into the invisible, the contextual, that is to say the temporary and variable.

In *Facundo*, Sarmiento did not yet show a mastery of distances and of natural forces, because the *pampas* was still represented as the location of mythicized barbarism. For Sarmiento, the humanization of the landscape with an economist's eye only followed later, in landscapes that were properly invisible. This same invisibility had, however protected Aboriginal peoples. But the movement from pre-capitalism to economic development transformed them into obstacles to be eliminated. This took place when Sarmiento intuited the dynamism of the United States. He remarked in admiration, "one New York house alone has in ten years sold a million and a half Atlases and maps to the public" (ROCKLAND, 1970, p. 138). Corollary to this was the right to property produced by deeding

of titles based on scientific land surveys of the territory. The eye generating such new images was precisely a rationalist one, governed by practice and technique in a destabilized world that now began with observation, doubt and heterodoxies. Originality was in the displaced application of a knowledge in gestation in concert with the constant recalibration of contextual relationships set in a new continent.

## 13 Hermeneutics

For such a shift to occur, there had to be a hermeneutic that could escape rigid paradigms, one that did not definitely establish meanings, and one that organized a network of changing contexts. All of the Americas demonstrate this in response to a Europe that unceasingly attempts to reassert its intellectual and economic power, if not its military and diplomatic powers. The Americas, in order to assert and build themselves in hierarchies had to interact carefully and as rapidly as possible with individuals from often heterogeneous cultures, whose experiences had already been marginalized in the old country. There was therefore only one minority that could escape the truth of the text, of celestial visions, of the stasis of the copy or of retaliation governed by the model even as many thinkers joined in the dynamic path of polysemic exchange that was gradually building American culture. This dynamism reopened the question of attribution, as Sarmiento showed. In his 1847 travel diaries, his observations directly contrasted with the epistemological underpinnings of his essay *Facundo*. He emphasized the relativistic categorizations of temporality that completely transformed the functioning of the process of attribution, because they made context all-important. He lended meaning to a world made unstable by the movement of progress and by the generation of optimism: "The Yankee is a born proprietor... he does not say that he is poor but that he is poor right now or that he has been unlucky, or that times are bad" (*Travels*, p. 166). But this contextualizing culture that apparently rejects all forms of essentialism and that validates work and order in a will to transform the new space by exploiting its resources is linked, above all, to the validation of people with European origins. South Americans and French Canadians are neither representatives of the metropolis (Spain for some, England for others), nor are they First Nations, but Creoles, "children of the earth," as Patrice Lacombe so often wrote, and as Mitre reinforced, ready to engage in the social and economic development of landscapes:

The Creoles, direct descendants of Spaniards, of pure blood, but modified in character by contact with the half-breeds, were the true sons of the soil, and constituted the basis of society. (Mitre in Kennedy



(1993), p. 19) [...] The Creole of South America is a sturdy offshoot of that civilizing Indo-European race to which is reserved the government of the world (p. 21).

A reterritorialization with essentialist goals was thus reinstated, in accordance to new American landscapes. The attribution process and its excluding functions were thereby simply displaced. The difference between Lacombe and Mitre is that the latter adds Condorcet's idea of a hierarchy of civilizations, with the most civilized peoples, namely the French and the Anglo-Americans, at the apex, because they had already achieved their respective revolutions. For Mitre, Creoles also belonged to the civilized peoples and had to assert themselves against the barbarians, who were (as for Sarmiento) the Aborigines and the people of the earth who had not attained an ideal of national and democratic freedom, enlightened by the Age of Reason. But evidently Mitre, with his modern, urban enthusiasm, did not discuss the important traditionalism of Latin American societies and of power brokers linked to agrarian elites who were often similar to the traditionalism of French Canadian elites as Monseigneur Bourget, Archbishop of Montreal's, proved with his fascination with Garcia Moreno in 1865, when the dictator of clerical Ecuador demanded annexation of his country by Napoleon the 3rd and the French.

## Conclusion

There is a clearly discernible difference between the conception of the world and the conception of the sign that establishes a world view. On the one hand, schooling proposed essences, and on the other, people like Parent or Sarmiento (in their scrutiny of the United States) connected themselves to a conception of the sign that attempted to incorporate impermanence and contextual practice within their preoccupation with technological impact on a space circumscribed by history (AREA, MORANA, 1994) This dynamic is nowadays taking place even more forcefully in the context of the dynamic of globalisation and of the knowledge-based society. However, even if these thinkers subscribed to a philosophy and to a hermeneutics closer to a type of contextualism (OCHS in GRIFFIN, 1993), they did not go so far as to align their reflections along the logic of interpretance as did Charles Sanders Peirce in *On a new list of Categories*, published in 1867 in the U.S. the year of Confederation for Canada 1867<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> David Savan asserts the following: "Peirce's philosophy as a whole takes representation and semeiosis to be the fundamental ontological process. To be real is to be represented in a final and infinite series of interpretants." (*An Introduction to C.S. Peirce's full System of Semeiotic*, p. 19). "His conception of a method which deliberately and regularly analyzes, criticizes and corrects itself is central to his theory of science and of the Final Interpretant" (p. 62).

Scholastic discourse was therefore confronted not only with the discourse of modernist rationalism as shown in the romantically hued modernity of red liberals like Dessaulles, but also to a practical liberal discourse. This latter was left largely unmentioned in research on French Canada. It was in the evolution that gave rise to the invention of nations in the Americas and particularly of Argentina, that practical liberalism was restored to its just importance. In fact, in the Americas, as we clearly see through comparisons with Argentina, it was not only clerical and voltairian discourses that intersected, but also those of English liberalism and United States' pragmatism. These two currents were represented by a writer like Sarmiento linked to English Free-masonry, or by a politician like Parent, influenced by the United States. Both engaged in a form of pragmatism, without reaching all of its possible conclusions, that replaced the barbarism/civilization paradigm with one of indolence vs. work. The exclusion based on personhood was replaced by a line of thought that valued the efficiency of action, that essential component in the Americas, one that confronted Europe with economic and cultural development. This paradigm dominated law, education, politics and society in both Canada and Argentina (DIGGINS, 1994). It tended, little by little, to escape the binarism at the forefront of modernity by approaching a dynamic of contextualization, one that defined modernity's triumphant expansion in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, this dynamic was slow to undertake the essentialism of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, as is evident in the writing of Venezuelan M.Briceño-Iragorry.

Nonetheless, an entire ideological, cultural and argumentative intertext travelled from one side of the Atlantic to the other, and based itself on a rationality that in one way or another rejected the other, particularly those others who failed to adapt to practical rationalism. However, this intertext is slowed and modified by American writers like Fermin Toro, Sarmiento and Parent. These latter attempted to culturally adapt rationalist industrial thought to a praxis of validating the immense territories inhabited by new peoples seeking individual growth through the right to property. Even if these thinkers travelled a great deal, (IMBERT, 1999), their influences were usually not through direct contact. An ambient discourse spread their affinities of thought, the most important of which was a capacity to live within two systems, academic culture and democratic, industrial, individual, pragmatic culture. This last approached, little by little, an elaborate economic-industrial space where such pragmatism found instrumental applications for its functioning, based on the validation of innovation (KEVELSON, 1993).

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, academics, theorists, researchers like Garcia-Canclini (1999) and David

Harvey (1989), as well as business and government administrators have had cause to rethink this dynamic and come up with new analyses of data linked to the explosion of global information networks. This revolution in the sharing of information redefines known epistemological frameworks and opens itself to a dynamic whereby postmodernism and postcolonialism are decontextualized and shift meanings and allegiances open to a relativistic relativism in which the philosopher Rorty (1989) and writer Nancy Huston could coincide. Nonetheless, the pragmatism of a William James or a James Dewey, as enacted beforehand by Horace Mann and his pedagogy, marks our conception of the application of knowledge, leading not to stable essences, but to shifting contexts, expanding the limits of signification (IMBERT, 2013) and action processes leading to a much more democratic world (IMBERT, 2014).

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Recebido: 15 de abril de 2015  
 Aprovado: 25 de junho de 2015  
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