We Are *Not* the World

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"We are the world" is a slogan with many possible interpretations. It may be interpreted as an updated version of the "white man's burden," the globalization of late capitalism or the "Americanization" of the world. From a different, multicultural perspective the United States is seen as a microcosm of the world. Of course, these different interpretations have their common denominator in the dual process of global drift of capital and global rift of populations. In a special supplement to *The New York Times*, "A World of Difference," the connection between commerce and diversity forms part of a celebration of multiculturalism that is really an advertisement for New York:

> This metropolitan area encompasses world-renowned neighborhoods like Harlem, Chinatown, Little Italy... and places the tourists don't know about — the Portuguese shops and restaurants of Newark's Iron-bound section, the Cuban enclave of Union City, the Arabian settlements of Brooklyn.... Somewhere in the tri-state area you'll find representatives of virtually every race, religion, nationality and ethnic background. That's a resource for learning few other cities in the world can offer.[1]

Is being the world — claiming to represent the numerous perspectives of peoples around the world — , however, a legitimate claim for New York (and by extension the United States) to make? Even if "we" could see things from the vantage point of all national formations, there would still be the insurmountable challenge of taking into account the particularisms of region, race, class, gender, religion, and so on within those formations. What I would like to argue here is that the "we are the world" complex is not exclusive to the global reach of MTV — as pointed up in a Jon Pareles piece entitled "As MTV Turns 10, Pop Goes the World"[2] — or of the new international advertising which now targets segmented publics not only within but also across countries.[3] Multiculturalists have jumped on the global bandwagon too and unwittingly seem to legitimize some unfavorable repercussions on representations of foreign cultures.

As a cultural critic of U.S. and Latin American cultures and the relations between them I have developed a persistent bifocality that induces in me an unease whenever the impulse to recognize the diversity that constitutes the United States overshoots its mark and self-servedly celebrates "American" multiculturalism as isomorphic with the world. On the

one hand, I am an enthusiastic advocate of greater recognition of our (U.S.) cultural diversity in educational and artistic institutions, in the media and other public spheres. My advocacy, of course, is not simply for *recognition* but more importantly for *access* to all the rights and services that go along with citizenship. On the other hand, I question the authority of U.S. intellectuals and activists within the above-mentioned institutions to represent other peoples, especially when the injunction to do so stems from our own internal identity politics (with repercussions, of course, for international cultural politics, which is the problem I am addressing). I must emphasize that this questioning did not develop in me early on as an actor in the U.S. multicultural movement; it was instead lavished on me when as a "representative" of progressive U.S. cultural politics I attempted to translate U.S. multiculturalism for my counterparts (progressive intellectuals and activists) in some Latin American countries.

I hasten to point out that Latin Americans' challenge to U.S. multiculturalism is by no means unproblematic. On the contrary, their suspicion of it — beyond a justified repugnance to U.S. imperialism — often stems from their own unease in valuing the cultural diversity of their own societies, especially when that diversity is defined in terms of race, ethnicity and sexual preference. Latin American intellectuals, who enjoy an entrenched class privilege, have not questioned enough the criteria by which their national cultures (articulated in public spheres to which access is limited) override their own under- or unrecognized cultural diversity. Indeed, until recently nationalism in Latin America transcended other more particularist struggles as the "most effective" resistance to imperialism. My critique of U.S. multiculturalism's global thrust, then, should not be understood to draw its legitimacy from Latin Americans' challenge to it. I bring up the issue, rather, as a factor which must be taken into consideration in assessing the reception of U.S. multiculturalism abroad.

My argument revolves around the problems raised by cross-cultural networks of dissemination and reception. One cannot speak of what U.S. culture means to Latin Americans without examining its means of dissemination: film and TV programs, the popular press, mainstream aesthetic culture, and mainstream intellectual journalism (*The New York Review of Books*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *Atlantic Monthly*, etc.) from the U.S. and their counterparts in Latin America. Academic culture, for better or worse, has relatively little influence in the representation of U.S. culture in Latin America, so that to this day what is conveyed by the mainstream media is almost exclusively what gets to Latin American reading and viewing publics. In the other direction, cultural flow from Latin America to the U.S., with few exceptions, is not mediated by equivalent Latin American institutions of dissemination. The fact is that decisions about what Latin American films should be shown, what books

are to be translated, what social and political movements to be represented, etc. are made by U.S. enterprises and the university system, which in this regard does wield considerable power, especially in its linkages to state policy making apparatuses but also in alternative spheres, such as those in which solidarity politics and multiculturalism interact.

This discussion of uneven networks of dissemination raises the important point that cultural representation — which is at the heart of U.S. multicultural politics — is always already mediated in ways that complicate well-intentioned attempts to give recognition to other cultures, especially those from Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. If we focus, for example, on the selection of foreign texts to represent foreign cultures, say those of the Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes, it is necessary to take into consideration certain circumstances that are likely to go unexamined: that as one of the canonized writers of the Latin American literary "Boom" of the 1960s and early 1970s his work was promoted within a particularly felicitous conjuncture in the newly consolidated transnational publishing industry; that his concerns with the definition of a continental Latin American culture reflected the aspirations and anxieties of elites and by no means those of Mexico's own non-hegemonic groups; that Fuentes' equivalent in the U.S. would likely be someone like Styron, not an Ishmael Reed nor even a Doctorow, and much less Latino writers like Rolando Hinojosa or Oscar Hijuelos; and that his work is grist for an academic mini-industry, initially in mainstream Spanish and Latin American literature departments in the U.S. and increasingly in those English departments that have begun to capitalize on and absorb — often with little expertise — so-called Third World literatures as part of their cultural or multicultural studies programs. That Fuentes opposes U.S. interventions in Latin America, criticizes late capitalism, and has established some multicultural connections — e.g., he is on the editorial board of *Transition* (co-directed by Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr.), along with the likes of bell hooks, Jamaica Kincaid, Toni Morrison and Cornel West — certainly keys the mainstream registers sounded in the portrayal above. But this only points up a politics of reception of so-called Third World figures that gives priority to high profile positions and gestures and neglects the contradictions of those figures in their own national settings; it really is odd that a mandarin like Fuentes could be recycled as a multiculturalist.

The multicultural call for representation of other cultures, for which a writer like Carlos Fuentes — or any other foreign writer, artist or political figure for that matter — may be chosen, requires attending to various, even incompatible agendas (corresponding to different networks of dissemination), not all of which have the progressive repercussions that multiculturalism arguably hopes to effect. In other words, U.S. multiculturalism's program of cultural representation may in fact expose

it to a minefield of consequences which it is not fully prepared to deal with. In what follows, I would like to explore some of these consequences, taking my experiences with the dissemination and reception of U.S. culture in Latin America and Latin American culture in the U.S. as a point of departure.

Multiculturalism has many varieties, ranging from the liberal touchy-feely, "I'm okay, you're okay," embrace of difference to the radical program of seeking justice for those groups who are oppressed within U.S. society, especially racial "minorities," women, gays and lesbians. Even in this latter tendency "doing justice" can vary from ensuring that these groups are represented without prejudice to legislating reparations. Not included on most multicultural agendas, however, are such issues as structural adjustment, uneven wages, the deterioration of the conditions of life. This is its greatest drawback, for multicultural identity politics have proven incapable thus far of addressing some of these larger problems. It is not enough to blame cultural categories — Eurocentrism, Western culture, etc. — instead of social problems. Another problematic goal of multiculturalism is the recognition of the cultures of origin of these oppressed groups: Native American cultures, Africa cultures, Asian cultures, and Latin American cultures. Multiculturalism's rationale is that such recognition will undo the "damaging effect on the psyche of young people of African, Asian, Latino, Native American descent" wrought by "negative characterizations or the absence of positive references."[4]

These statements are made in The New York State Education Commissioner's Task Force report, "A Curriculum of Inclusion," which goes on to argue, correctly in my view, that the remedy for the misrepresentations of these groups' contributions is a multicultural education which properly represents the history and culture of oppressed groups in U.S.

> A truly multicultural curriculum represents a body of knowledge about the African, Asian, Latin American/Caribbean, Native American, and European experience and presents an alternate approach to the education system. To the extent that this alternative curriculum with its equitable treatment of all cultures eliminates omissions, corrects erroneous material, provides new analyses, contradicts fallacious assumptions, and challenges ethnocentric traditions of all kinds — it improves existing educational endeavors and becomes the basis for innovative, creative models of learning for all students and staff.[5]

Questions about this remedy arise, however, when one considers the problem from the vantage point of the cultures of origins of these groups and the levels of mediation through which "accurate knowledge" about them is (re)produced. The report is wholely motivated by U.S. identity politics — which makes sense since it is a U.S. educational system that is being reformed — and none of the drafters of the report are currently taking part in the cultural dynamics of the above-mentioned foreign

regions. It is not adequate, in my opinion, to have a U.S. Latino speak for, say, Ecuadorans or an African American for Ghanians. The point I am trying to make is that even immigrants from these countries do not have the same perspective as those who remain, despite the emergence of translocal and diasporic communities comprised of social and cultural networks that defy national boundaries.[6] Multicultural reform, then, must extend its reach to include the knowlegdes produced in these other countries *independently* of U.S. identity politics, not as authentic representations — *authenticity* is not the issue — but rather as participants in their own cultural politics. This is an enormous and very delicate task, especially since it must reckon with the political economy of U.S. artistic, educational, and media institutions as producers of a knowledge of the world that reflects U.S. global interests. Moreover, we are inscribed in this political economy in such a way that it is not always clear whether or not the knowledge produced by multiculturalism ultimately ends up serving these global interests. Let me give some examples.

Readers may remember a certain reluctance on Nelson Mandela's part to play the role that the Dinkins Administration had scripted for him in a dramatization of African-American identity politics when he visited New York City shortly after his release from prison. Furthermore, Mandela's refusal to condemn Cuba, which supplied the ANC with more than just moral support, raised all kinds of hypocritical posturings, especially from those who were invited by Mandela to criticize Israel for its oppression of Palestinians. An analogous caution regarding assimilation to U.S. Latino identity has been taken by many representatives of revolutionary or progressive Latin American social movements while participating in solidarity politics in the U.S. A better example, perhaps, is the case of a Salvadoran artist who complained to me [no doubt anticipating the sympathy of an almost-fellow-Salvadoran — I am the son of Salvadoran parents and have worked in the solidarity movement since its inception] of her exclusion from contemporary art shows. From a mainstream perspective, she explained, her neo-abstract expressionist works were considered derivative, as if only "Americans" and Europeans could legitimately work in this style; but from a "multicultural" perspective, too, her work was found wanting because she did not wear her identity on her sleeve — or rather her canvas — thus not embodying the aesthetic ethos sought out by alternative art institutions.

Such an injunction to accommodate to U.S. identity politics was clear in "The Decade Show," an exhibition sponsored in partnership by the Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, the New Museum of Contemporary Art and the Studio Museum in Harlem. Subtitled "Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s," the catalogue essay explained that the show was a "proclamation that 'history' is not objective and that the American experience is much more heterogeneous than generally asserted."[7] Signifi-

cantly, the heterogeneity of the "American experience" extended to the whole world and to a multiple historicity:

> The work included in this exhibition may be seen as material evidence of alternate viewpoints. Many artists of color, for example, in their philosophical, aesthetic, and spiritual linkages to the precolonial societies of Africa, Asia, and America, legitimize diversity, resist Eurocentric domination, and create a foundation from which to analyze and explain contemporary social phenomena. Feminist, gay and lesbian artists similarly affirm that there are other ways of seeing, ways equal to existing cultural dictates.[8]

That designated U.S. "minority" artists, as well as others who claim subaltern identities, should pretend to represent such a global and historical diversity is contested by some activists, artists and academics whom I have met abroad. Let me give an example. A year ago I was thus confronted at a conference held in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro on race and gender in Latin America. As the organizers were familiar with an essay on U.S. Latinos that I co-wrote with Juan Flores and published in these very pages, I was slated to give the postmodern account of ethnic and racial politics, for the sake of comparison with Latin American countries. I also took the opportunity to try to correct what I had long perceived to be the Latin American image of U.S. culture, an image of consumerism and simulation or of postmodern high art and literature, as projected, respectively, by the mass media and high culture institutions. If the mass image of "America" consisted of sitcoms, fast food restaurants, malls, deserted highways and inner cities in ruins, à la Jean Baudrillard and Wim Wenders, postmodern art and literature seemed like the curriculum of an English Department cultural studies section.

In Latin America, "American" postmodernism means Robert Venturi, Philip Johnson, Andy Warhol, David Salle, Robert Longo, Cindy Sherman, Laurie Anderson, Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Peter Sellars, John Adams, Philip Glass, Steve Reich, David Byrne, John Barth, Donald Barthelme, Robert Coover, William Kennedy, Charles Olson, Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo, Raymond Carver, Susan Sontag, William Gass, Richard Rorty, Fredric Jameson. The list could go . . . . The mainstream image of "America" is so ingrained in Latin America that the most acclaimed Brazilian documentary in 1989,[9] shown around the same time as the conference on race and gender, consisted of a virtual reproduction of the above-mentioned names, plus those of actors like Dennis Hopper, businessmen like David Rockefeller, and politicians like Henry Kissinger, as well as the indispensable names of those foreigners, like Baudrillard or Paul Virilio, who have made their careers projecting "America" as a postmodern utopia of global dimensions. In fact, this documentary, titled "America" after Baudrillard's eponymous book, construed the setting more as a generalized ontological condition that seduces the foreigner than as a particular country. Of course, no Latinos, no Native, African or

Asian Americans were included among the intellectuals, artists, scientists interviewed, although they did form part of the simulscape.[10]

Just as no "minority" figures were included in the documentary, the participants at the conference had never heard of Latino intellectuals and artists like Gloria Anzaldúa, Alurista, Pedro Pietri, Oscar Hijuelos, Guillermo Gómez Peña, Martín Espada, Luis Valdez, Sandra Cisneros, Sandra Estévez, Nicolosa Mohr, Rolando Hinojosa, Miguel Piñero, Tino Villanueva, Lorna Dee Cervantes, and many others. I argued that mainstream U.S. culture translated en bloc to mainstream Latin American cultures. This is the effect not only of the global power of U.S. media but even more of the elitist character of Latin American public spheres, in which subaltern groups not only do not participate in the representation of national culture but are also radically excluded from the distribution of resources and services. Class difference, constituted in great part by racial and ethnic difference, is clearly marked in the aesthetic and public spheres. In fact, a nickname has been coined in Brazil to express this race-bound class division: *Belíndia*, that is, a combination of bourgeois Belgium (the southern part of Brazil) and a stereotypic Calcutta (the Afro-Brazilian Northeast).

The first and most sustained response to my presentation was given by a black Venezuelan woman and fellow panelist. She pointed out that my U.S. Latino, multicultural perspective would soon follow the paths already cleared by mainstream "American" culture, likewise setting the trends of cultural production that people all over the world would either have to follow, resignify or resist. Much as I might not like to admit it, she added, the transnational culture industry was already packaging multiculturalism, as exemplified by rap music and hip hop culture, which was not only being produced as such in all Latin American countries but which was also being fused with local musical forms such as salsa, samba, and national rock musics. We and others debated whether or not this constituted "cultural imperialism," arriving more or less at the consensus that cultural give and take are inevitable, especially in an era of electronic reproduction which makes global dissemination inevitable. Under such circumstances any notion of cultural purity makes little sense. Are samba-rap or roforengue — a blend of rock, forró and merengue — any less Brazilian because they incorporate musical forms invented elsewhere? Is it accurate, moreover, to repudiate transnational cultural flows when the very subaltern peoples multiculturalism wants to represent in all their difference engage in these flows in ways that make it difficult to draw the line between what is and is not "Western"? It is not, then, a matter of acculturation or "Americanization" but, rather, differential reception to modernization according to particular, local needs, what Jesús Martín-Barbero calls "repossessing culture."[11]

There is a well-founded reaction against Eurocentrism within multiculturalism that seeks to valorize other, non-Western cultural experiences. The transfer of this tendency to Latin American cultures, however, can produce serious distortions, not the least of which is to argue that Latin America is non-Western. The exoticization that mainstream U.S. culture wreaks on even the most "universal" Latin American writers is bad enough. A *New York Times* book review of Mario Vargas Llosa's *The Green House* — in which he attempts social representation as a totality of form, adapting 19th century realism to Latin America — dredges up every cliché imaginable:

> A squirming mass of tatterdemalion humanity emerges in these pages.... There are Amazonian river people and Amazonian women. There are missionary nuns, lawless speculators in raw jungle rubber. Indian tribesmen who use blowguns and pilots on river boats in the amphibious world...you get everything: the agony of a woman in childbirth, the brutalities of Indian torture, moments of intoxicated joy, a fatal game of Russian roulette, a provincial wedding...it is electrically alive.[12]

But multiculturalism can also incur in its own "otherizations" in what, in my opinion, is its preference to see Latin Americans as non-Western, thus privileging a quasi-essentialized nativism. Rigoberta Menchú's *testimonio*, *I . . . Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*, widely used in multicultural courses, is important not only for its account of Indian life in Central America but also for its challenge to hegemonic forms of expression. However, Menchú's own experiences point rather to a process of *transculturation*, theorized initially by Cuban Fernando Ortiz and insightfully applied by the Uruguayan Angel Rama as a corrective to the unidirectional notion of "acculturation." Transculturation is a dynamic whereby different cultural matrices impact reciprocally — though not from equal positions — on each other, not to produce a single syncretic culture but rather a heterogeneous ensemble.[13] After all, Menchú does learn to read and write Spanish and ultimately becomes a human rights activist in an international context, making use of the knowledges and technologies of "Western" culture.

Latin American cultural experiences, I would like to argue, constitute *alternate* ways of being Western. The vast majority live in urban centers with a long history of transculturation. The working and middle classes take a course of study which spans "Western civilization" from classical antiquity to the crisis of modernity. They too were raised on the same films and TV programs as the rest of the Western world, plus those produced in the media megalopolises of Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro, basically using the same genres: sitcoms, soaps (*telenovelas*), game and variety shows, etc. The point I am trying to make here is not that Latin American cultures are Western in the same way as the U.S. or France but, rather, that they are inscribed in a transcultural relation to Western mo-

dernity just as much as, say, Eastern Europe (or for that matter multicultural U.S.). And just as in Eastern Europe there are great variations in the composition of this transculturation, say, between Romania and Hungary, in Latin America too one can discern a range of Western transculturation from the predominantly indigenous Guatemala and Paraguay to Argentina, whose population has a higher percentage of European descendants than the U.S. Of course, there is a temporal difference in these different transculturations. According to Ortiz, Cuba transculturated in less than four centuries "the whole gamut of culture run by Europe in a span of more than four milleniums,"[14] suggesting a partial continuity in the process of Westernization. He duly observes that Cuban transcultuarion failed with regard to the native population (i.e., they were wiped out) and that it was cruel to African slaves. However, on the more positive side of the process, there was a "consequent creation of new cultural phenomena" in which the role of Africans, Spaniards, Chinese, and others must be recognized.

It is the specificity of the "heterogeneous ensemble" which resulted and the attendant problems caused by modernization that must not be assimilated to blanket notions of the colonial, the postcolonial or the Third World. Latin America's transcultural Westernism, it must be emphasized, is radically different from the cultural matrices of countries like Nigeria, Iraq, India or China. To begin with, unlike these countries, Latin America was colonized by Europeans who *settled* there, transferring their religious, linguistic, political, juridical, literary and social systems. These, of course, were transculturated in contact with non-European peoples, whose own systems, however, were utterly destroyed, with the exception, of course, of everyday beliefs and practices which survived the destruction of indigenous imperial civilization. Since independence in the early nineteenth century, but also earlier in the activism of some progressive clergy like Las Casas, recognition of these peoples' culture and reparation for the destruction have been on the agendas of certain political movements, at least formally, and diverse public spheres. Consequently, coming to grips with Latin America's diversity comes much earlier than in the U.S., although it gets absorbed by nationalism, the means by which *criollo* elites negotiated their insertion in the economic and political forces, known as modernization, unleashed from Western Europe.[15] [It should be added, at least in the form of an indispensable excursus, that the group most excluded by nationalism was comprised of women, who, at least since the beginning of this century, were active in citizenship organizations that traversed national boundaries.[16] It is the non-nationalistic character of their concerns — or concerns not construed in accordance with a male gendered conception and practice of nationalism — that accounts in part for women's exclusion from the intellectual and cultural history of Latin America. There are almost no collections of Latin

American intellectual and cultural discourse which include women contributors.]

It may seem odd that someone who subscribes to multiculturalism should put forth the argument that Latin America is not non-Western. In the first place, mine is not a defense of "Western civilization" in its imperial forms. It is, however, a challenge to the monolithic straw man that has been construed as the West, as if there were no variants in it. Not everything that forms part of Western cultures can be reduced to imperialism. I follow the thinking of those Latin Americans who distinguished between, on the one hand, the arrogance of Western European and United States dominant classes that projected themselves as heirs to the putative westward move of History, facilitated by the rejection of miscegenation, and, on the other hand, an alternative occidentality emerging from Latin America's cultural heterogeneity. Already in the early nineteenth century, Simón Bolívar declared that Latin America was comprised of European, Native American and African contributions.[17] Not only is high culture (literature, architecture, etc.) evidently a composite, but so also is popular culture: samba and salsa would not exist without the contributions of the waltz and the polka, on the one hand, and diverse percussive styles and genres from Africa, on the other. As the West was suffering its decline, the Dominican Pedro Henríquez Ureña, along with the likes of Asturias and Carpentier, was characterizing the project of *Nuestra América* as a utopian, emancipatory one, an alternative one, however, to that exclusive "Western civilization" construed in the Enlightenment.[18] We must not forget that Latin America's alternative, transculturated occidentality derives not only from its non-European roots but also from its non-hegemonic European sources in the Iberian peninsula, with its double legacy of Counterreformation and Baroque cultures, and very heterogeneous ones at that.

It seems to me that this difference is not fully appreciated in certain pedagogical approaches to so-called Third World literatures. For instance, exemplary as Barbara Harlow's *Resistance Literature* is for making available in English contestatory texts from Africa and the Middle East, censored within "first" and "third" world publishing institutions, as well as already translated Latin American materials, the outcome, at least for this reader, is frequently homogenization of political and aesthetic intent and purpose. Organized under the same thematic rubric, the selections from Ernesto Cardenal (Nicaragua), Balach Khan (Baluchistan), Roque Dalton (El Salvador), Onesimo Silveira (Cape Verde), Jorge Rebelo (Mozambique), A.N.C. Kumalo (South Africa) and others sound strikingly similar.[19] The reader has no way of knowing whether the other poets share Cardenal's parody of Biblical verse for an almost disingenuously innocent political effect, or the caustic irony which Dalton turns on really existing socialism and on his own communist beliefs. Furthermore, these two

Central American poets are squarely within Western poetic tradition, drawing from classical sources (Cardenal's epistles, epigrams and psalms) and avant-gardist rupture (Cardenal's "exteriorism," patterned in part after the poetry of Pound and Williams; Dalton's post-Dadaist anti-poetry).

I refer to Harlow not because I think that she has effected a distortion; after all, the main purpose of her book is not cultural representation but to provide a politically sheltered reading public with a contestatory literature unavailable in mainstream publications, which she does rather successfully. The problem, rather, is with those U.S. critics who, in pretending to bring us writers representative of other cultures, do not attend carefully enough to differential networks of dissemination and reception, a problem Harlow addresses scrupulously. The emergence of Luisa Valenzuela as an important Argentine writer in some U.S. circles provides a good case for analysis. Her work is touted for its allegorical treatment of torture under military dictatorship and the peculiar gendering of torturing and tortured bodies in these circumstances. The topics make her relevant to progressives and to feminists and other academics who follow the fashion of "writing the body." However, there are many Latin American writers who have dealt with these topics and who have considerable uptake in their own cultures, such as fellow Argentine Marta Traba and the Chilean Diamela Eltit, both of whom are virtually unknown in the U.S. and who should be of interest to the same constituencies.

I bring up Valenzuela in order to get back to the issue that I started with; namely, that in selecting any text for cultural representation one must pay attention to the networks of dissemination that have made that text available. After all, we should not treat texts as if they were innocently there, just for the picking. Two networks of dissemination have contributed to Valenzuela's rise in the U.S. First, the connection with NYU's Institute for the Humanities, where she rubbed shoulders with the likes of Susan Sontag, Joseph Brodsky, and others who were involved in the construction of "dissidence." Her work was construed to accommodate to that construct, perhaps because as an Argentine the experiences could be more easily assimilated to the Eastern European model. In any case, assimilation to this paradigm brought her a certain recognition within the mainstream publishing world to which Sontag and company had access. Then came Valenzuela's writing on Nicaragua and on the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, which laid the bridge to feminist and multicultural academia.[20] I bring up these factors to account for Valenzuela's emergence in the U.S., which in turn enabled her to get her work published in Argentina. There is certainly nothing wrong nor peculiar in this; it is practically a norm for many writers, Joyce, Hemingway, Ionesco, Beckett, and Nabokov among them. In their exile or emigré condition, however, they were not construed as representatives of Irish,

American, Romanian or Russian culture. Valenzuela, on the other hand, is being construed as a representative of a country, and indeed of a continent, in which she has little uptake as a writer. Why? Because she, like another multicultural favorite, Eduardo Galeano, is construed as a representative of dissidence or the Third World in the networks of dissemination in which they circulate.[21] In both cases, these figures are manipulated for particular political ends, which is fine for our own tactical purposes — say the opposition to imperialism in Latin America — but certainly not if we want to know how reality is construed from other perspectives.

With these brief examples I have tried to argue that critics ought to pay more attention to how writers and other cultural workers are inserted into networks of dissemination; by not doing so we go on about our business as if we were the world, collaborating in the construction of cultural representatives that may, in fact, not really be representative at all. I would like to extend this point and make the argument that there is no guarantee that multiculturalism will have only progressive effects. Not only is there the problem of a U.S.-based multiculturalism enveloping the cultural production of other countries; worse still, it may unwittingly, despite its resistance to conservative attacks, become a "front" for our own integration into a global market in which the image — the politics of representation — supplants resources and services shrinking at an ever faster pace.

There is one haunting image that stays in my own mind when I think of multiculturalism and globality together. Outside of the university and the unemployment line, the U.S. army, that global defender — or, more accurately, mercenary — of free trade in the interests of transnational capital, was projected as the epitome of multiculturalism by the televisual charade that promoted the Gulf War to markets around the world. Foreign cultural critics were quick to remark on the multicultural composition of the Army.[22] Blacks, Latinos, women were seen taking part in the banalities of everyday life as they awaited the go-ahead to invade Iraq. The war also brought the army renewed multicultural demands: that women be permitted to engage in combat and that gays and lesbians be given equal opportunity to serve their country. But these U.S. "multiculturals" were not the only ones to demand the right of "inclusion." There was strong opposition to this display of U.S. imperialism throughout Latin America, and yet a *New York Times* report chose to give more play to those Latin Americans who sought to enlist in the U.S. Army as a way of getting a green card than to the infintely more numerous who protested. Contrary to coverage in Latin America, the *Times* reported: "'We have had far more people trying to enlist than people throwing stink bombs,' said a spokesman at the embassy in Lima, where a sign warns that the embassy is not accepting volunteers. 'It is presumed to be a ticket to a green card.'"[23]

Even President Saúl Menem of Argetina sought to get, not a green card, but brownie points on the scorecard of Bush's Enterprise for the Americas Initiative. He sent two warships, a cargo plane and 450 troops to the Persian Gulf, declaring that "[t]his new attitude of Argentina [i.e., its abandonment of protest of U.S. imperialism] opens enormous possibilities for us in the new international order."[24] Bush, of course, "rewarded Buenos Aires with a private breakfast."

It may be objected that this image of multiculturalism is a co-optation. My response is of course. The media certainly acted irresponsibly in concocting this charade. However, while Latin Americans certainly understood the imperialist nature of this display of media globalism, they nevertheless were able to articulate their critiques by means of a differential, critical reception of CNN. Anyone who has spent some time in Brazil, Venezuela or even Cuba knows that Latin Americans are questioning the monolithic character of national identity and consequently no longer position themselves to global cultural dissemination as before, when any demagogue could invoke the nation as the highest instance of fealty against the evil Empire. CNN is not so much despised as *used* in keeping with the demands of local struggles.[25] We in the U.S. should not hold the so-called Third World to a different standard when it comes to the tactical use of the media. We allow ourselves to get off, for example, on Madonna, arguing in some cases that her brassiere is a subversive postmodern cultural intervention,[26] but we piously imagine Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans rejecting these wicked Western media inventions for fear of being colonized. At least in the Latin American case there is no fear of Western culture since there is no hard and fast boundary that pits it against them.

Misrepresentation is not the sole domain of dominant classes and institutions in the U.S. By not carefully examining networks of dissemination, multiculturalists too can get it "wrong." It is not enough to denounce U.S. imperialism for we incur in our own brand of it when we pretend that a more intimate knowledge of U.S. Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans will give us privileged insights into the diversities that constitute Panama, Angola, Iraq, Vietnam, indeed, the entire world. Multiculturalism celebrates crossing borders and a cultural transformism worthy of Zelig:

> Today, eight years after my departure [from Mexico], when they ask me for my nationality or ethnic identity, I can't respond with one word, since my 'identity' now possesses multiple repertoires: I am Mexican but I am also Chicano and Latin American. At the border they call me *chilango* or *mexiquillo*; in Mexico City it's *pocho* or *norteño*; and in Europe it's *sudaca*. The Anglos call me "Hispanic" or "Latino," and the Germans have, on more than one occasion, confused me with Turks or Italians. My wife Emilia is Anglo, but speaks Spanish with

> an Argentine accent, and together we walk amid the rubble of the Tower of Babel of our American postmodernity.[27]

Is it only in "America" that even a recent immigrant has pretensions of being the world? Néstor García Canclini interviewed many residents of Tijuana, just on the other side of the border where Gómez-Peña's "Taller de Arte Fronterizo/Border Arts Workshop" used to operate, who had serious reservations about this Zeligism:

> Other Tijuana artists and writers challenge the euphemistic treatment of the contradictions and uprooting that they discern in the work of *La Línea Quebrada/The Broken Line* [the Taller/Border Arts Workshop journal]. They reject the celebration of migrations caused by poverty in the homeland and in the United States. Native Tijuanos or those who have resided there for fifteen years or longer are outraged by the insolence of these artists' unconcerned parodies: "These are people who have just arrived and immediately they tell us who we are, they dictate how we should discover ourselves."[28]

We should take these complaints seriously; crossing borders still unleashes difference. We cannot show the world how to discover itself; we are *not* the world.

Notes

1. "A World of Difference," supplement to *The New York Times* (4/16/89): 12.
2. Jon Pareles, "As MTV Turns 10, Pop Goes the World," *The New York Times* (7/7/91): H1, H19 & H22.
3. Michael Lev, "Advertisers See Global Messages," *The New York Times* (11/18/91): D9.
4. New York State Commissioner of Education Task Force On Minorities Report, "A Curriculum of Inclusion," (July 1989): iii.
5. "A Curriculum of Inclusion," 39.
6. These transnational networks are extremely important for rethinking the national context of multiculturalism. However, they are operative in a limited scope and thus cannot be used to support an argument for a world culture of translocality or translocalities. The argument that Mexican migration to the U.S. has created just such a "postmodern" social space has been put forth by Roger Rouse, "Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism," *Diaspora*, 1, 1 (Spring 1991). Mayra Santos Febres has also suggested such a new space in "Viajes translocales: emigración y globalización de la cultura," paper presented at the *Conferencia sobre Estudios Culturales*, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Cayey (1/23/92).
7. "The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s," Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art (May 16 to August 19, 1990), The New Museum of Contemporary Art (May 12 to August 19, 1990), The Studio Museum in Harlem (May 18 to August 19, 1990).
8. Ibid.
9. *América*, produced by Videofilmes Produções Artísticas Ltda, Rio de Janeiro, 1989. The accompanying volumes of images and interviews were written and compiled by Nelson Brissac Peixoto: *América. Imagens* and *América. Depoimentos* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1989).
10. It should be explained, in all fairness, that Brissac Peixoto did attempt to include African American and Latino intellectuals and artists — I myself was consulted by him on this matter — but was discouraged from doing so by the producer, who thought that they would "politicize" the documentary in ways (i.e., racially) that were less palatable than the more classical politics of a Kissinger or a Chomsky, both of whom perorated on "American" culture.

11. Jesús Martín-Barbero, "Repossessing Culture — The Quest of Popular Movements in Latin America," *Media Development*, 2 (1989): 21-24. See also *De los medios a las mediaciones: comunicación, cultura y hegemonía* (Mexico: Gustavo Gili, 1987).
12. Reprinted on the back cover of *The Green House* (New York: Bard Books, 1973).
13. See Fernando Ortiz, "Del fenómeno social de la 'transculturación' y de su importancia en Cuba," in *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar*, (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1978), 92-97; Angel Rama, *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina* (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1982).
14. Ibid., 94.
15. *Criollo* is the term used to indicate Latin Americans of non-indigenous descent, especially European background. The word bears a common etymology with *creole*, which in linguistics refers to the languages that resulted from the transculturation of diverse languages, especially European and African and/or native American languages. The fact that the Spanish and Portuguese spoken in Latin America, with very few exceptions, are not creole languages attests to the pervasive incorporation of these countries into at least a lingustic component of a European cultural system. This is not the case in other "colonial" situations in Africa and Asia.
16. See Francesca Miller, "Latin American Feminism and the Transnational Arena" and Mary Louise Pratt, "Women, Literature, and National Brotherhood," in Seminar on Feminism and Culture in Latin America, *Women, Culture, and Politics in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 10-26 & 48-73.
17. See Simón Bolívar, "Reply of a South American to a Gentleman of this Island [Jamaica] (September 16, 1815)," in *Selected Writings of Bolívar*, vol. I, ed. Harold A. Bierck, trans. Lewis Bertrand (New York: Colonial Press, 1951), 103-22.
18. See Pedro Henríquez Ureña, *La utopía de América* (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1978), originally published in 1925.
19. See Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987), 31-74.
20. See her essay, "The Five Days That Changed My Paper," in *Profession 91*: 6-9.
21. For one of the most insightful critiques of the unfortunate homogenizing effects of assimilating heterogeneous cultures to the notion of the Third World see Aijaz Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the National Allegory" *Social Text*, 17 (Fall 1987) and "'Third World Literature' and the Nationalist Ideology," *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, 17-18 (New Delhi, June 1989).
22. See, for example, Beatriz Sarlo, "La guerra del Golfo: representaciones pospolíticas y análisis cultural," *Punto de vista*, 40 (julio-setiembre 1991): 28-31.
23. James Brooke, "War's Ripples Lap at Latin America," *The New York Times* (2/4/92): A10.
24. Tim Golden, "Argentine Leaer Sees Gulf Role As Best Way to Reverse Old Image," *The New York Times* (10/1/90): A14.
25. For an analysis of the reactions to transnational flows of knowlegde and culture in Latin America, see my "Postmodernity and Transnational Capitalism in Latin America," in George Yúdice, Jean Franco and Juan Flores, eds., *On Edge: The Crisis of Contemporary Latin American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 1-28.
26. See Ann Cvetkovich, "Marketing Differences: Feminism as Cultural Capital," paper delivered at the Modern Language Association Convention, San Francisco (12/27/91).
27. Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "Documented/Undocumented," in *Multicultural Literacy: Opening the American Mind*, eds. Rick Simonson and Scott Walker (Saint Paul: Grayworl Press, 1988), 127-28.
28. Néstor García Canclini, "Cultural Reconversion," in *On Edge: The Crisis of Contemporary Latin American Culture*, 42.