The Central and the Peripheral

The Central and the Peripheral: Studies in Literature and Culture

Edited by

Paweł Schreiber, Joanna Malicka and Jakub Lipski

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INTRODUCTION

In the opening passage of the life of Theseus in his *Parallel Lives*, Plutarch writes about geographers, who

> crowd on to the outer edges of their maps the parts of the earth which elude their knowledge, with explanatory notes that 'What lies beyond is sandy desert without water and full of wild beasts,' or 'blind marsh,' or 'Scythian cold,' or 'frozen sea.' (Plutarch 1914, 4)

The dangers described in this passage, even though ostensibly referring to the physical domain, are in fact cognitive ones. After all, the sandy deserts, blind marshes and frozen seas described by the ancient geographers do not describe real territories stretching beyond the scope of the map, these remaining as yet undiscovered. They are only placeholders for the unknown, phantasms projected onto uncharted land in order to warn travellers against trying to reach what lies outside common knowledge. The monstrous becomes the best substitute for the not yet understood. It is always situated on the outskirts, on the circumference in the periphery. The world consists of the centre, a safe island of the known, and the terrible sea of the unfamiliar which surrounds it.

Representing reality in terms of secure, familiar centres and dangerous peripheries is much more than an impressive rhetorical figure. It constitutes one of the cornerstones of human thinking in general. The research of Yuri Lotman proved that the centre/periphery opposition is one of the best ways of explaining how human culture works and develops. Eleanor Rosch, in her theory of prototypes, showed how the same principle governs the structure of human vocabulary. It would seem that the tendency to impose this simple spatial concept on everything we perceive is one of our most elementary cognitive instincts.

Marlow, the narrator of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, describes how fascinated he was with maps when he was a child:

> I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, 'When I grow up I will go there.' (Conrad 2001, 10)

At first glance it seems that we are back in the world shown in the passage from Plutarch—still divided into well-known areas and places which remain a mystery. The "Here be monsters" captions are long gone, but the fear of the unfamiliar remains, and there are reasons for it, even though young Marlow does not fully understand them. Once more, the crucial danger has less to do with the physical difficulty of getting to the unknown places, than with the cognitive problem of facing something one cannot comprehend.

There is, however, one crucial difference. In Plutarch's world map, the unknown was synonymous with the dangerous peripheries. In Marlow's maps, most of it is situated in the heartlands. In Plutarch's time, the centre was surrounded by peripheries. In Marlow's, it is the other way round—or the terms themselves have become confused. During Marlow's journey towards the peripheries of his civilisation and the centre of Africa, he realises that one person's periphery can be another's centre, and many simple geographies of the world and of the mind, clearly separating the known from the unknown, have become obsolete.

How can one reconcile this complexity with the fact that human thinking cannot escape the centre/periphery scheme? How to find one's way a world in which peripheries become centres, and centres turn into peripheries? It is difficult to say. An ancient mapmaker might say we have entered "a sandy desert without water and full of wild beasts" (Plutarch 1914, 4). Who can try to traverse such lands? Referring to the unknown in his own work, the periods which did not leave any reliable records of notable events, Plutarch writes: "I might well say of the earlier periods: 'What lies beyond is full of marvels and unreality, a land of poets and fabulists, of doubt and obscurity'" (Plutarch 1914, 4).

Working on this book, we took the same approach, claiming that the unknown, always "full of marvels and unreality," is sometimes best probed by "poets and fabulists." Thus, the subsequent chapters try to determine how the problem of centres and peripheries has been dealt with in the domains of literature and culture. The contributors focused on different aspects of the issue—from travel writing, through attempts at mapping the self, to finding central and peripheral territories in narrative itself. The end result does not offer a clear answer to all the questions asked—a map of the territories we have tried to explore. We do not believe they *can* be fully mapped. However, we do hope that the accounts of the sixteen journeys we have presented here are well worth sharing.

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PART I:

GEOGRAPHIES

CHAPTER ONE

THE GARDEN OF FORKING PATHS OR LOST IN THE LITERARY FUNHOUSE: ALTERNATIVE SPACES IN THE NOVELS OF JOHN BARTH

ZOFIA SZACHNOWSKA-OLESIEJUK

In the postmodern era the literary concept of space, like every other constituent of fiction, has gained an utterly different meaning as its perception has undergone a deep transformation. In the reality of relativity, contingency and ontological uncertainty, the very idea of solid, plausible, physical space has lost its *raison d'etre*, giving way to a more indefinite, abstract landscape that is not confined by the laws of physics, but which is wide open to the infinite potential of human imagination. Therefore the American writers of highly experimental literature from the 1960s, while shaping their fictitious worlds, more often than not rejected traditional understanding of space, replacing Newtonian physics with Einstein's theory of relativity, and predominantly focusing on the concept of time-space seen as one dimension.

Yet it is worth pointing out that one of their key inspirations were the writings of Jorge Luis Borges—especially his seminal volume entitled *Fictions*. In this little, yet ground-breaking collection of short stories the Argentinian writer encapsulates a whole new insight into the internal structure and external surface of both the world and literature, which seem to merge into one entity. The Universe is seen here as the ultimate Book written by the ultimate demiurge, who nonetheless might be only a dream or a figment of another creator's imagination, who in turn could also be a mere dream, and so on *ad infinitum*. The metaphysical anxiety born out of this ontological multiplication is perfectly reflected in a space built of numerous, parallel worlds, each consisting of numerous winding and forking paths of an infinite maze. What is more, in the Borgesian literary

realm the characters may choose diverse alternatives simultaneously, living in "the several futures and several times, which themselves proliferate and fork" (Borges 2000, 83). From this perspective, the literary space is not linear but circular or spiral; not literal but abstract; not physical but metaphysical; and, lastly, not spatial but verbal.

Such an innovative approach towards space perfectly fits the idea of literary recycling, postulated by John Barth in his pivotal essay entitled "Literature of Exhaustion," in which he refers to the works of Borges as a perfect incarnation of transcending exhausted possibilities of fiction. Seeing that the rule of verisimilitude does not apply in contemporary reality any more, instead of attempting to imitate the world as we seem to perceive it, we should rather distort and transmogrify it to the limits of our cognitive capacity, because only then are we able to create art. In his writing, John Barth persistently follows this path, with a tendency to structure his literary spaces upon the symbolic paradigm of Borgesian *Fictions*. The motif of the Labyrinth leads us to the space of myth, while the universal Book reads as the space of language itself as well as the whole treasure house of literature.

Let us now pass on to the first space, namely the one of mythical provenance. Although Barth touches upon mythical material in most of his novels, in this part of my presentation I will focus on the book entitled *Chimera*, in which the author juxtaposes commonly known folk stories, derived from the mythopoeic reservoir of both the West and the East. While presenting new, original versions of the tales of Scheherazade, Perseus and Bellerophon, he blends them into one, indeed chimeric, postmodern myth. As befits a fabulator *par excellence*, Barth deconstructs the very concept of myth, introducing his heroic characters to spaces totally alien to their original habitat. In rendering the stories of two (ostensible) Greek demigods, Perseus and Bellerophon, as well as Scheherazade, the epitome of a storyteller from *1001 Nights*, he changes not only the details concerning the content of these yarns, but also some rudimentary mythems, so eagerly postulated by structuralists such as Levi-Strauss.[1] And so we have a stellar romance between a revived Medusa and her murderer; a Chimera "back in business again" (Barth 1997, 283); hosts of feminists and homosexuals (e.g. Anteia and Megaphentes); erotic toys in the form of "weighted balls from Baghdad, dildoes from the Ebony Isles" (Barth 1997, 4), horses getting high on marijuana-like herbs (Pegasus), people changing into documents (Polyeidus), and Bellerophon himself, existing only in the form of the voice of his purportedly dead brother, Deliades.

This is just the beginning of Barthian transformations. The two Greek demigods, who are depicted outside the spaces of their traditional myths, while undergoing midlife crises—Perseus repines at his marriage with Andromeda, which is "on the rocks" (Barth 1997, 71) and Bellerophon is dispirited, "forty and too tired" (Barth 1997, 138)—act within the framework of the Pattern of Mythic Heroism. Their struggle to repeat individual units of Campbellian monomyth in the second stage of their lives leads to their downfall, because they do not comprehend Athene's suggestion that their "mode of operation in this second enterprise must be contrary to [their] first's: on the one hand, direct instead of indirect . . . , rather passive than active" (Barth 1997, 93-94). What makes the storyline even more convoluted is the fact that they are almost schizophrenically conscious of the fictitious dimension of their lives, which is being filled by the author with literary distortions. Bellerophon, dwelling upon the story of his life and fed up with all the incongruities inside his myth, provides the reader with metafictive commentary, thus revealing his familiarity with Robert Graves' work entitled *The Greek Myths*:

> As for that farrago of misstatements purporting to be the story of my life, the kindest thing to be said about the first three paragraphs [of *Bellerophoniad*] is that they're fiction: the brothers are too many and miscast; my name is mishistoried (though 'Bellerus The Killer' is not its only meaning); my acquisition of Pegasus is mislocated as to both time and place . . . ; [stages] *d* and *e*,[2] perhaps, are slightly less inaccurate, if no less incomplete, and their events are out of order. (Barth 1997, 203-204)

Scheherazade is also given the knowledge of existing only on the pages of the collection of Arabic folk tales, through Genie—Barth's alter ego—who appears out of thin air in king Shahryar's palace to tell her own stories. At the beginning of the tale she only wants to "pretend this whole situation is the plot of the story we're reading" and the protagonists "are all fictional characters" (Barth 1997, 8). However, in the course of the novella, Genie, as if wrapped in a strange literary loop of time and space, delivers her those same *Arabian Nights*, which entails further ontological uncertainty. Due to such anachronisms and other intrusions from the future that abound in the novel, the space of myth becomes utterly metafictional, and the characters, enslaved in the fictitious network of conventions, lose their identity, becoming mere pawns in the hands of the Author. And yet there exists a possibility to break through these arbitrarily imposed frames of mythical space, which are defined by Carl Jung as "original revelations of the pre-conscious psyche" (Graves 1992, 21-22)—primeval archetypes embedded in the collective memory. For Barth, however, whose *Chimera*

could well be considered a polemic with structuralism,[3] the narrative of one's life transcends the confinements of patterns, templates, archetypes and collective experience. There are no universal truths, no role models to follow and the only possible way to exist meaningfully is to recognise the fallacy behind the limited and conventional space of myth/fiction and free oneself of it, even if it means entering an utterly incomprehensible, unreliable or even impossible dimension— just like Perseus, who liberates himself from the Pattern, falls in love with New Medusa and ends up as a constellation in the sky, eternally recapitulating *Perseid* together with his beloved lady.

And with this recapitulating comes another literary space of Barth's fiction, namely the space of language which, in multiple variations, becomes the only mode of existence for his characters. Let us focus for a while on *Lost in the Funhouse*, where language itself constitutes the subject matter of the volume. Ambrose Mensh, the narrator whose avatars reside in all the stories in the book, is a figure utterly immersed in words, who "even at the height of pleasure . . . must watch himself react, must convert the experience into language" (Harris 1983, 107). Nevertheless, several of his incarnations wish to reject language altogether—they feel their "first words weren't [their] first words" (Barth 1988, 35) and "everything's been already said, over and over ... ; there's nothing to say" (Barth 1988, 105). This is why they seek to regain the pre-linguistic paradise, reflected in the image of the Mensh family's idyllic garden. In it, the infant, the not yet named Ambrose, leads an ego-free, unconscious life. But, for Barth, to live means to fall into language which seems to lie at the very core of our existence. As Charles B. Harris points out, the Schopenhauerian as well as Nietzschean concept of reality born as "a linguistic construct of our own creation" is eagerly embraced by the postmodern writer (Harris 1983, 110). And so his protagonists function in the world of words, be it their own or somebody else's.

The most straightforward exemplification of this idea is to be found in *Dunyazadiad*, where Scheherazade must entertain the king with stories in order to survive. In the court of the cruel sovereign her silence equals death. Therefore every night, if she is to see the next dawn, Scheherazade not only has to conceive a fabula, but also clothe it in a form that is both entertaining and cunning, so that each time Shahryar is left intrigued. Otherwise, her (and her sister's) life will be terminated. The author, however, goes far beyond the basic "tell or die" metaphor. Some of his protagonists see their life as a sequence of words and sentences written in the Book—for example Perseus who, when analysing and interpreting the very essence of his myth, says:

> Thus this endless repetition of my story: as both protagonist and author, so to speak, I thought to overtake with understanding my present paragraph as it were by examining my paged past, and thus pointed, proceed serene to the future's sentence. (Barth 1997, 80-81)

Better still, Barth transfigures his characters into language itself. This is perfectly illustrated by the figure of Bellerophon, who in the end of the novel turns out to be nothing more than a voice, belonging to somebody else (Deliades/Polyeidus/Barth) and realising his existence in the form of print on the pages of *Bellerophoniad*. Hence, he is not a teller—he *is* a tale, "imperfectly, even ineptly, narrated" (Barth 1997, 138), "a beastly fiction, ill-proportioned, full of longueurs, lumps, lacunae, a kind of monstrous mixed metaphor" (Barth 1997, 308), as he bewails, discovering his true, linguistic nature.

Personified language also transpires throughout the entire *Lost in the Funhouse* collection. In *Menelaiad*, king Menelaus is stripped down to a mere voice, while recounting his bizarre and mysterious relationship with Helen. At some point we learn that "when the voice goes he'll turn tale, story of his life" (Barth 1988, 167). Similarly, in the story called "The Autobiography" the narrator functions only "in the manner of speaking" (Barth 1988, 35), muttering "to the end one word after another" and seeing himself as a "halt narrative, first person, tiresome" (Barth 1988, 39).

Such transformation does not, however, push the literary figures into the abyss of ontological nothingness. From post-structuralist perspective, living in/as the text/language/story is the only mode of existence—no matter how falsified and illusory. This idea is endorsed by Alan Lindsay in his *Death in the Funhouse*, where he claims that for *Chimera*'s protagonists it is impossible to "survive meaningfully outside" the words (Lindsay 1995, 130). A similar view can be found in George Steiner's *After Babel*—the critic believes that "a total leap out of language" would mean our "death" (Steiner 1975, 111). Therefore, Barth does not separate language from being; on the contrary—he sees these two concepts as unified, thus overcoming the conundrum of the existential blank.

The fact that Barth's characters inhabit the space of words enables them to live in yet another dimension, namely in the act of rendering their stories by other people. Even if they fade into the void of nothingness in one fiction, they will still reiterate their actions in hundreds of parallel worlds of readers/listeners. In this respect the idea of an infinite storytelling maze resembles the Borgesian metaphor of the Book which is comprised of different spaces and "divergent, convergent, and parallel times" (Borges 2000, 85). This is why king Menelaus, whose ontological status is literally suspended between inverted commas, is not afraid of

existential emptiness as long as his story is "recounted" wherever, however, by whomever. Similarly, Perseus in his "always ending, never ended" epilogue presents the eternal fate of himself and his beloved Medusa, which is to

> become, like the noted music of our tongue, these silent, visible signs; to *be* the tale I tell to those with eyes to see and understanding to interpret; to raise you up forever and know that our story will never be cut off, but nightly rehearsed as long as men and women read the stars. . . . (Barth 1997, 133-134)

As we can observe, the motif of existing textually through other people's perception reappears in many works by Barth, becoming metafictional exemplification of the ideas postulated by the postmodern torchbearers of the death of the author, chief among them Roland Barthes. According to their vision of any given narrative, the role of the author is played by the reader/listener, or more precisely—readers/listeners. As Barthes asserts, "a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and the place is the reader" (Barthes 1978, 148). Hence there are the multitude of stories within a story and the infinite number of paths for Barth's protagonists to follow in the labyrinth of words. Sometimes they take their plight humbly, on other occasions they rage about existing in so many literary spaces at the same time, but as Philonoë, Bellerophon's wife, explains:

> narrative art, particularly of the mythopoeic or at least mythographic variety, has structures and rhythms, values and demands, not the same as those of reportage or historiography. Finally, as between *variants* among the myths themselves, it's in their *contradictions* that one may seek their *sense*. (Barth 1997, 194, emphasis mine)

And so, in both *Chimera* and *Lost in the Funhouse*, existence is granted only to the people converted into stories that are heard, read and told.

The last alternative space worth mentioning in the context of Barth's prose is the realm of literature itself, across which the characters drift back and forth, again perfectly aware of the metalevel of their lives. At one point in *Chimera* Scheherazade meets the 20th century Genie, who falls straight into the plot of *The Arabian Nights* and proceeds to recount to her the folk stories (what else) from the very same volume. Their fanciful encounter seems to prove that in the domain of *belles-lettres* there is no

original authorship since every story is being recycled over and over again. Barth shares this idea with Borges, of whom he writes:

> For [Borges] no one has claim to originality in literature; all writers are more or less faithful amanuenses of the spirit, translators and annotators of pre-existing archetypes. .. .[F]or one to attempt to add overtly to the sum of 'original' literature by even so much as a conventional short story, not to mention a novel, would be too presumptuous, too naïve; literature has been done long since. (Barth 1967, 33)

In the context of *Chimera* a similar approach is assumed by Jerry Powell, who notices that "all authors have drawn from the same stories for centuries" yet these "stories change by shifts in viewpoint," which is the only possible way whatsoever to create art (Powell 1976, 60).

Interestingly, Borges in his *Fictions* also refers to *The Arabian Night*—he analyses the actual time-space framework of the collection and distorts it in a very peculiar way, recalling

> the night at the centre of *1001 Nights*, when the queen Scheherazade (through some magical distractedness on the part of the copyist) begins to tell, verbatim, the story of the 1001 Nights, with the risk of returning once again to the night she is telling it—and so on, *ad infinitum.* (Borges 2000, 82-83)

Barth, who actually mentions this passage from "The Garden of Forking Paths" in his "Literature of Exhaustion", eagerly employs this spiral structure in his works, thus equipping his stories with an unsettling tinge, both in ontological and epistemological terms. As for *Chimera,* the very last sentence, divulging the treacherous character of the third novella, remains seemingly unfinished. The printed version of Deliades' voice tells us "It's not *Bellerophoniad.* It's a," but as we close the book and look at the front cover, there it is—the proper ending, serving as the beginning at the same time. "It's not *Bellerophoniad.* It's a CHIMERA," a hybrid, a monster, a combination of incongruent, incompatible entities. Similar devices can be observed in the frame tale of *Lost in the Funhouse*. It is a typical example of the Möbius strip, which goes: "Once upon a time there was a story that begun once upon a time..." In both cases this eternal return creates spiral space, winding towards the impossible end, and at the same time receding from it. This perfectly encapsulates the postmodern philosophy of "both/and" that has replaced "either/or."

An even better example of simultaneity of the opposites can be found in *Lost in the Funhouse* and the eponymous story of the whole collection. The space in here assumes the form of a labyrinth, where the main

protagonist, Ambrose, gets lost during a family trip to a seaside town. Paradoxically, the maze, with its hundreds of mirrors, reflecting an infinite number of reality's images together with hundreds of alternative paths to be chosen, creates a sense of openness rather than confinement. And, just as in Borges' stories, mutually exclusive choices made in such a place can coexist, without interfering with each other: "Naturally he didn't have nerve enough to ask Magda to go through the funhouse with him. With incredible nerve and to everyone's surprise he invited Magda, quietly and politely, to go through the funhouse with him" (Barth 1988, 90). What is more, as Todd W. Martin rightly observes, in the labyrinth Ambrose begins the journey to adolescence, gains awareness and, most importantly, establishes his identity as an artist (Martin 1997, 152). For him the space of a maze symbolises the space of literature: highly complex, misleading and dark, and yet designed to give people the real opportunity to feel, to experience—in other words, to live. On one level, Ambrose decides to become the writer for others who lack the imagination to produce fiction, although he is painfully aware of its consequences: solitude, frustration and eternal artistic insatiability.

> He wishes he had never entered the funhouse. But he has. He wishes he were dead. But he's not. Therefore he will construct funhouses for others and be their secret operator—though he would rather be among the lovers for whom the funhouses are designed. (Barth 1988, 79)

Yet on a higher level, he becomes a Borgesian deity, writing the Book of the world, comprised of words, sentences, stories, their counterstories and other, alternative stories. All his narratives, however, though ostensibly literary, bear real life-experience. Therefore his funhouse is

> not of octagonal pavilions and paths that turn back upon themselves, but of rivers and provinces and kingdoms . . . a maze of mazes, a twisting, turning, ever widening labyrinth that contain[s] past and future and somehow implie[s] the stars. (Borges 2000, 79)

In other words, the Labyrinth of life and the Book of literature merge into "one and the same" entity. In this respect, the very idea of the world understood as the ultimate text inherently anchored in language echoes the post-structuralist concept of reality seen textually, which is to be interpreted, related to the Other, and thus transcended.

On the whole, Barth's fictitious spaces are not only alternative when compared to conventional approaches towards this literary constituent, but they also undergo complex transformations. To some extent, his experimental

treatment of the spaces of myth, language and literature serve as an illustration of some rudimentary tenets of postmodern philosophy. In these spaces we are shown, among other things, the problems of arbitrary life roles and patterns, the fictitious nature of reality, ontological uncertainty, textuality of the world and the lack of clear-cut boundaries between art and real existence. Nonetheless, he seems to have another purpose in doing so: owing to his fresh approach towards this literary concept, Barth makes his reader reconstruct the space anew so as to show us that it is only through wandering around many forking paths of the labyrinth of our life story are we capable of living and gaining knowledge about the world and the self.

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Notes

[1] For more on structuralist analysis of myths see: Levi-Strauss 1963, 206-232.

[2] Robert Graves in his complete edition of Greek myths presents the story of Bellerophon, dividing it into six stages and labelling them with letters from *a* to *f*. See: Graves 1992: 252-254.

[3] In the course of the whole novel we can encounter plenty of evidence supporting this view: Barth provides us with mock pictures of mathematical graphs and diagrams reflecting the internal structure of myths in particular and literature in general, and his characters strive to deal with the template of herohood, pursuing the illusion generated by a protean figure, namely Polyeidus. An interesting analysis of this character is carried out by Patricia Warric, who sees The Old Man of the Sea as a creative force of imagination, and thus the very essence of every narrative. Seen from this perspective, Polyeidus, who cannot be captured due to his constant transformations, might be considered a metaphor of literature onto which it is impossible to impose any artificial patterns. For more on Polyeidus' function in the novel see: Warrick 1976, 73-85.

CHAPTER TWO

EUROPE DECENTRALISED IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *THE ENCHANTRESS OF FLORENCE*, BERNARD MALAMUD'S *PICTURES OF FIDELMAN* AND ALEJO CARPENTIER'S *CONCIERTO BARROCO*

DOMINIKA BUGNO-NARECKA

The purpose of this paper is to indicate the existence of the decentralised position of Europe in the following literary works: Bernard Malamud's *Pictures of Fidelman,* Alejo Carpentier's *Concierto Barroco* and Salman Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence.* The focus will also be on the reasons and the consequences of pushing Europe to a marginal position. From a geographical perspective the works selected are written by writers of three different origins outside Europe. Salman Rushdie was born in Bombay and lives in the United States, Alejo Carpentier was a Cuban writer by origin and Bernard Malamud was an American Jew. It can be a factor which already decentres Europe as a continent, but rather on the non-literary level. What the works have in common on the literary level is one, consistent and specific image of Europe in general, and Italy in particular, as an unfriendly place of less importance to the protagonists. In the three literary works Europe is presented as a place which is no longer the cultural centre for individuals. It is no longer the cradle of civilisation, art or thought, although it remains the background for significant developments. The actual centre, as will be shown, lies elsewhere.

Before discussing the essence of this paper, a general observation must be made. The notions of the centre and the periphery are relative concepts

—they depend on the perspective of the observer. Simultaneously, as they stand in opposition, they are the source of various tensions. In terms of colonialism,[1] each country conquering foreign lands and establishing colonies there is treated by itself as the centre—a powerful, ruling, dominant and imposing body. The conquered territory remaining "obedient" and "submissive"[2] to the centre and adopting elements of culture from the centre, becomes the periphery, that is, the less significant one. If William Egginton's (2009) notions of "the major" and "the minor" are adopted, the centre in the postcolonial context corresponds to the major strategy. It wants us to believe and attempts to make us convinced that what is offered is the reality, while in fact, it is merely a construct and a representation of something which is not there. The periphery stands for the minor strategy, that is, the actual reality which undermines the representation. In other words, the centre is the major which claims the right to shape one's world-view, identity and life. It may have either a natural influence on the individual who accepts it freely, or may force one to agree to the new order of things. On the other hand, the periphery, identified with the minor, is that which in fact does shape one's identity regardless of the centre's claims, frequently discrediting the centre first.

As I have already mentioned, centre and periphery are relative notions. From the coloniser's standpoint the distinction between what is the centre and what is the periphery seems to be clear. It becomes more complicated, and thus probably more interesting, with the perspective of the colonised, who, although treated as the periphery by the coloniser, is the member of another cultural centre, perhaps less powerful at first sight, on whom the features of a new, presumably dominant, centre are imposed. As a result of the tension between those two centres, the colonised either surrenders to the ways of the new centre or is confused which values are truly his. The consequence of the former is pushing the old ways, that is, habits, customs, traditions, opinions and so on, to the unconscious level or rejecting them completely, thus, making them minor. The possible outcome of the latter is becoming a hybrid, so a new, third quality, which is a mixture of various features from both sources (Salgado 1999).

It is impossible to neglect the fact that Europe is considered the cradle of Western culture and civilisation (Davies 1996). It is also notorious for its colonial activity and the imposition of a new order onto conquered territories and peoples. In this sense Europe is perceived as a cultural centre influencing peripheries. The peripheries, however, resist and reject that influence, having experienced Europe's mediocrity. What is more, the protagonists become disillusioned with the image of Europe they had and