James Viloria

The Politics of the "We" in the Construction of Collective Identities in Histories of Architecture in Canada

The field of architectural history in Canada has traditionally been underpinned by a nationalist model that has related the built environment to notions of collective, universal, and human identity. Over the past century, little has been written to challenge this ultimately Eurocentric paradigm of granting citizenship to buildings. What unites some of these attempts at constructing so-called Canadian histories through architecture is the use of shifters, or deictics, words that are "understandable only from the perspective of the speaker, and thus [shift] from speaker to speaker in ways that are comprehensible in spoken, face-to-face conversation but often become ambiguous over the telephone or in formal writing."[1] In this paper, I focus on the pronouns "we" and "our" as shifters employed by authors in Canada, whose works, as a result of this grammatical usage, culminate in an "ambiguous" portrayal of a particular situation. Examining selected texts on architecture in Canada since its confederation in 1867, I wish to show how national identities have been imagined through the simultaneous use of "we" and "our" and a comparison of architecture in Canada to those perceived national models found in Europe and the United States. The latter is a feature of colonial discourse known as fixity,[2] which utilises stereotypes, in this case, of *Canadianness*, *Britishness*, and *Americanness*, as contrastive pieces that have been reduced and essentialised to fit into a coherent and complete whole.

With this in mind, my methodology is threefold. First, I wish to contribute to the historiography of architecture in Canada, and thus I approach this paper from a perspective from which I will not discuss any building or complex per se, but rather the ways in which the built environment has been analysed by writers. In this regard, I recognise the significance of the roles that governments have played in shaping architecture for nationalistic purposes, but I limit my analysis to examining how these explicit expressions of power have insidiously penetrated the discipline of architectural history and have allowed readings of both governmental and non-official buildings to be associated with an idea of national identity. Second, I take a post-colonial position that aims at understanding the ways in which European imperialist ideologies intersect with North American ethnic pluralism, a goal that is rooted in redefining the discipline of architectural history on models other than the nationalist one. Here, I rely on the acceptance of an idea of nationalism, as outlined by Anthony D. Smith, as originating in Europe, and diffused to other continents through imperialism, colonialism, reaction or imitation.[3] And, third, I seek to uncover examples of "implicature," drawing on translation theory and contrastive text linguistics. Following Basil Hatim, I believe that: "Implicatures are unstated propositions which lurk between the lines of discourse. This evaluative way of speaking is not accidental, but the product of an intentional act: there is a right to implicate, as it were. Also, the propositions that are implied may be consistent with one another and add up to a semantic system, a set of ideological commitments."[4] These three methods are by no means isolated in different parts of this essay; they intertwine within the matrix of methodology to form one arbitrary closure in the history of the history of architecture in Canada.

James A. Viloria is a PhD candidate in the department of Art History at Concordia University and works as Authority and Vocabulary Editor at the Canadian Centre for Architecture.

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Colonization

With the creation of Canada in 1867 came the Canada First Movement, a short-lived political party founded in Ottawa by Charles Mair, T.C. Haliburton, and H.J. Morgan to promote a type of Canadian nationalism that sought territorial expansion on behalf of a select group of Canadian citizens. Members of the Canada First Movement saw their newly founded nation as British, English, and Protestant. Canada First omitted from its nationalist vision the recognition of, among others, French, Roman Catholic cultures that were already rooted in the makeup of the nation. The grandeur of the great new land, the ambitious idealism of the educated young, and an understanding that absorption by the United States threatened a too-timid Canada, spurred the growth of this political and literary movement.[5] While the ideals of Canada First were absorbed by older political parties, the movement signalled that a framework of Canadian identity was in the making, one which would grow to contain, amidst its intersecting and oblique vectors, the conjunctural points between architectural history and Canadian nationalism.

Written representations of a Canadian architectural identity rooted in a British tradition can be seen throughout the first half

of the 20th century. Toronto architect A.H. Chapman, for example, in a seminal 1913 article entitled "Architectural Development in Canada" in *The Yearbook of Canadian Art*, characterizes a search for a Canadian architectural identity based on designs from what Chapman calls "our Mother Country." He writes: "The next step was when we began to depart from our home influence and the precedents established by old work, and to think for ourselves [...]."[6] It is obvious that Chapman employs the unspecified "we" and "our" as racial and gendered indices to his standing as a Canadian male of English descent.[7] What is perhaps less obvious, however, is Chapman's referential exclusion of non-British citizens of Canada, signalling that the core of a Canadian identity is British, not unlike the one proponed by the Canada First Movement of 50 years earlier.

In addition, Canadian architecture, as seen by Chapman, follows an evolution from the buildings of "our Mother Country" to an amalgamated form incorporating influences from movements that represent Britain and the United States: "We have far to go, but owing to our appreciation of architecture upon broad academic lines evinced by our neighbours to the south, and our respect and love for the traditional beauty and feeling expressed in the work of our Mother Country [...] we should be able to reach high ideals."[8] Britain, for Chapman, is equated with "traditional beauty and feeling" while the United States is characterised by "broad academic lines." Architecture becomes Canadian first through a recognition of a British essence, then through an identification of what is both British and American, and, finally, through an application of Canadian citizenship to this new hybrid. If Britain is the "Mother Country," then Canada is seen as the child, and the United States is left in an ambiguous position as perhaps a big brother or friendly foe in this familial structure of identity.

While both the Canada First Movement and the words of A.H. Chapman represent early attempts at describing Canada through the vision of an exclusionary and contrived nationalism, these viewpoints have remained ostensibly unquestioned, and, as a matter of course, legitimised, in architectural texts throughout the 20th century. While Chapman's description of architecture through a Canadian lens, or perhaps of Canada through an architectural lens, could be dismissed as a simple product of its time, embodying an un-evolved sense of history of a relatively less plural society, there endures today a legacy of his ideas. From this point of view, Chapman's short article represents a continual theme in the history of the relationship architecture in Canada has had with national politics. Moreover, Chapman's article, republished in Geoffrey Simmins's 1993 *Documents in Canadian Architecture* as one of several written works addressing issues of "general significance" in the history of architecture in Canada, manifests the perpetuation of cultural nationalism as something of value.

But of what is this value composed, and why has it stood the test of time? A partial answer to this question, I believe, lies in the incessant use of the pronouns "we" and "our," which at first glance appears innocuous, but upon closer examination contains suspect ideological, if not political, positionings. As literary theorist Marianna Torgovnick points out: "Who controls the cultural 'we' and how they use it remain, then, vital issues. For the 'we' is more than a pronoun. It is a state of mind that can set agendas, establish what is or is not possible or (more fearfully) what is or is not permitted."[9] This "state of mind" in the case of Chapman's "we" is one that can be read as a type of nationalism that is controlled by historical indifference.

West, North, East, or South?

The acceptance of an idea of Europe as the bearer of significant cultural meaning has persisted throughout the 20th century in architectural texts that address the built environment in Canada. One example is the survey text *Building Canada: An Architectural History of Canadian Life* by Alan Gowans. Published in 1966, the work posits, through its title, a direct commensurability between architecture and an idea of Canadian life based on an understanding of the country in relation to European architectural traditions. In addition, Gowans endorses the notion of architecture as cultural expression when he writes: "Canadian (or any) architecture, considered as cultural expression, is the product and reflection of a number of patterns of development, operating simultaneously, and superimposed one on the other."[10] Gowans's corroboration of an idea of Canada under the influence of Europe diverges somewhat from that of Chapman's, in the sense that Gowans supports an image of Canadian architecture that draws not from particular British or American notions of design, but rather from a more general international current that comes from what he refers to as "the Western World" or simply "the West."[11] In his book's concluding essay, entitled "Manifest Destiny in Twentieth-Century Canadian Architecture," Gowans writes:

> To consider architecture of the twentieth century as *we* have done — to see it as the manifestation and heir of Western civilization throughout the ages — is to open all sorts of new perspectives on it. It suggests the proper use of architectural history, for instance: neither to mine it for forms to copy cold as in Victorian times; nor to reject it out of hand as in the anti-Victorian 1920s; but to study it as a record of the creative principles by which the West has lived in the past and that are still applicable to architecture today (emphasis mine).[12]

The "we" as employed by Gowans is one which sets an even grander universal entity than that of Chapman, which discloses an idea of Canada as part of "the West," with the implicit assumption of "other" countries being either "north," "south," or "east." To use the "we" within the context of cardinal points (also shifters in their own right) is to favour the established, narcissistic, Enlightenment and imperialist ideals that place the so-called "West" at the centre of significant existence. While much has been already published in the past few decades on the construction and deconstruction of the "margins" in contemporary society, in the field of architectural history in Canada, little has been written even to challenge universalist discourse. As is often the case with texts such as Gowans's, I feel the need to make allowances for the conditions or contexts within which the work was written in order to reach a more pleasant and less tense understanding of these histories. I could understand, for instance, that *Building Canada: An Architectural History of Canadian Life* comes from a time during which the Cold War between the democratic "West" and the communist "East" was indeed a reality that even Gowans himself addresses when he writes:

> On every side new non-Western powers had appeared, some friendly to the West, some hostile, most indifferent and only anxious to batten on what remained of the West's wealth. Worse, the outlines of two major non-Western societies were emerging, both of them violently hostile to the West, [...] both wanting nothing more than the chance to descend on the accumulated treasure of the West as the Goths and Vandals descended on Rome or the Western crusaders on Byzantium so many ages ago. For the whole Western world it is now, as for the American colonies in 1776, a case of unite or die [...]. That continuing unity of all the West which is manifested in twentieth-century architecture should be the inspiration for all Canadian culture. Create a great Western architecture and you will create a great Canadian architecture. Cultivate and maintain the great traditional values of the West and this historically improbable country [Canada] will become a great nation.[13]

In this respect, perhaps it is understandable that Gowans's text pulls architecture into the Cold War. What is seemingly irresponsible, however, is that architectural historians have neglected even to question this mode of universalist methodology.

The need to belong

This can be witnessed most recently in the comprehensive 1994 publication by Harold Kalman entitled *A History of Canadian Architecture*, a book which has been hailed by architect Bronwen Ledger, as a "new" history that is "not only an important reference source but also a highly readable work that can be taken as a history of Canada seen through its buildings and urban design."[14] Indeed, Kalman's history germinated in a time substantially different from that in which Chapman and Gowans produced their works. Canada's population had grown to comprise not only citizens of British, French, and Irish descent, but also those from non-European cultural heritages, with the added recognition of First Nations peoples as a vital part of Canadian society. Yet, despite this new, late-20th-century context in which Kalman wrote *A History of Canadian Architecture*, there occur, within its pages, the implicatures of cultural nationalism, identified through the shifters "we" and "our."

Kalman's *A History of Canadian Architecture* contains 900 or so pages of richly informative text and illustrations, but what is curious about his work is the manner in which the authorial stance changes from an active and personal position in the preface of the book, to a passive and impersonal approach throughout the body of the text, and, finally, to an active and universalist point of view in the conclusion. In the preface, Kalman presents to his readers a definition of what he sees as a Canadian architecture, using the pronoun "I," and writes:

> By 'Canadian' I mean the architecture of the many cultural groups that have lived within the geographical boundaries of Canada [...] as well as architecture that is characteristically Canadian. Some curmudgeons have wrongly argued that the latter does not exist. It is true that much that was built in Canada was derivative, closely related to sources in Europe and the United States. But that did not prevent the development of a uniquely Canadian character.[15]

Like Chapman, Kalman perceives a development of a Canadian identity through a filter of reductive comparison where notions of Europe and the United States play key roles. Unlike Chapman, however, Kalman begins his history with a narrative that situates his individual nationalist stance, employs a relatively more objective mode of language throughout the body of his text, and in the conclusion returns to a subjective tone, but one in which he replaces the individual "I" with the unspecified and collective "we." Here he writes: "[I]t is in our buildings that we discover much about our distinctively Canadian nature. At the same time, by searching for common threads in the architecture of all periods, we can begin to identify a specifically Canadian point of view."[16] One specifically "Canadian point of view" to which Kalman refers is characterised by "the tendency to simplify prototypes, to absorb ideas from abroad and modify them into something more restrained and less ostentatious [...] These architectural directions mirror the modesty, self-deprecation, and avoidance of the spotlight that are so characteristic of Canadians."[17]

The transition from Kalman's individual "I" to the universal "we" demonstrates a strategy that works to impose a sense of Canadian nationalism through subtle persuasion. As Torgovnick

asserts, the "'we' [...] coerces and assumes the agreement of the 'you' it addresses."[18]

Kalman, by using the "we" indirectly disregards the individuality — comprising race and gender among other features — of his readers as he attempts to place them into a simplified notion of a Canadian identity, all within a discourse surrounding architecture. While the "we" carries with it the potential of exclusionary interpretations, where it is ambiguous whether or not all Canadian citizens are included, arguably more caustic is its potential to objectify the individual reader through a denial of their subjectivity. For Torgovnick, the "we" "offers the bribe of authority and tradition, and the security of belonging — but at the cost of losing touch with the 'I' behind the 'we.' [...] And it masks the multifaceted complexity of group identities."[19]

Furthermore, Kalman creates a collective identity which includes himself. Therefore, not only is an image of Canada reduced to simple characteristics, Kalman's image, as part of this "we," is reduced, as well, to personify these same characteristics. As Torgovnick explains, "the 'we' also effects a repressive politics of inclusion, in which those who identify with it must surrender crucial aspects of themselves."[20] Kalman, hence, denies himself his own individuality and subjectivity. Similarly, as with Chapman and Gowans, while Kalman's promotion of a Canadian culture perhaps invokes comforting and anodyne ideas of stability and purity in a world of change, diversity, and uncertainty, at the same time, it hides the reality of this very world. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall has suggested, "everybody comes from some place — even if it is only an 'imagined community' — and needs some sense of identification and belonging."[21] Yes, perhaps everyone needs to belong, but this belonging can take the form of a diversity of permanent or impermanent alliances crossing various domains of professional and personal life within a federation.

Implicit in the search for national identity through architecture is the notion of anthropomorphizing the built environment by giving it the human attribute of citizenship. Architecture, when placed within the realm of national culture along with other forms of artistic creation, continues to be used by politicians to unify Canada through contentious and often nebulous understandings of the notion of culture itself. The equating of national history with architectural heritage in Canada dates back to the 1880s, when national heritage policies were first discussed. Historian C.J. Taylor has thoroughly documented the continuing process of building preservation and the development of so-called "heritage areas" in Canada.[22] But since the development and life-span of architecture do not coincide temporally with the patterns of immigration to Canada, how can the history of an increasingly ethnically plural nation match the history of the built environment of the same country? While many buildings in Canada have survived for almost or over a century, their occupants, in the case of urban domestic architecture, for example, have obviously and consistently moved on, and have not necessarily been replaced by persons of the same racial or ethnic makeup. Moreover, not all Canadians have played a role in designing the built environment. While architectural writers attempt to fix national identity through the use of "we" and "our," at the same time immigrants arrive and destabilise the order of this conception.

Two solitudes

Neglectful, however, of this pluralistic reality, writers on architecture in Canada perpetuate positivistic scholarship with pretensions to universality in order to make history seem more objective. Closely related to the problematic usage of "we" is the notion of "two solitudes" imagined by writers to represent the built environment. A term popularised in 1945 by Hugh MacLennan's influential *Two Solitudes*, the concept addresses a commonly perceived dichotomous tension between the English and French speaking inhabitants of Canada.[23] This binary representation of Canadians has been widely validated and accepted throughout the second half of the century by academics, the media, and the general public. Even in the city of Montreal, comprising an increasing diversity of ethnic communities, the passing of time has not diminished the relevance of this descriptor. In the book *Montreal in Evolution*, Montreal architect and urban planner Jean-Claude Marsan devoted a section, entitled "Two Solitudes," to an architectural analysis of the developmental division of the city into two poles of concentration, accentuated by the influx of British immigrants and of rural French Canadians in the 19th and 20th centuries.[24] One example of the manner in which Marsan's text tilts the balance between history (in this case, civic) and architecture lies in his representation of the Jewish populations. Barely touching upon any Jewish presence in the city, he restricts his analysis to stating that "Montreal is divided into two distinct cities, or even three, if one takes into account the existence of a mixed, shifting, predominantly Jewish population, centred on St. Lawrence Boulevard and serving as a buffer zone between the two linguistic groups."[25] Marsan's history, therefore, is one in which the description of the architecture of the two solitudes dominates while that of a third, the Jews, remains marginal. In addition, in the section on Victorian religious architecture in his book, Marsan describes European and American stylistic influences on Montreal Christian churches,

yet he omits Jewish religious architecture.[26] He excludes, for example, the 1887-1890 construction of the synagogue for Shearith Israel (Remnants of Israel), the oldest Jewish congregation in Canada, established in Montreal in 1768.[27] In this regard, the title of Marsan's book, *Montreal in Evolution*, can therefore be seen as a misnomer which could be replaced by the more appropriate *Christian Montreal in Evolution*. For Marsan, the presence of Jews in Montreal is incidental rather than seminal, and within the 400 or so pages of his text, the recounting of Jewish history is kept to a bare minimum. In contrast, the Shearith Israel Synagogue was included in Kalman's text, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, in the section on Victorian buildings. Thus paradoxically, the Shearith Israel synagogue could be seen as a Canadian building (through Kalman), but not one found in Montreal (through Marsan). Given only these two texts, Jews are inside Canada, yet outside Montreal.

Yet, as Jacques Langlais and David Rome have pointed out in their book *Jews and French Quebecers: Two Hundred Years of Shared History*, Jews have been vital in the development of Montreal, Quebec, and Canada since the 18th century. With the 1760 conquest of New France, the authors write that Jews "became partners and neighbours [of French Quebecers] as well as spiritual kin. They fought beside Canadians to win civil and religious freedoms for Quebec. And they helped put Montreal on the world commercial and industrial map."[28] Langlais and Rome cover the momentous history of Jews in Quebec from an early presence between 1627 and 1882, to the Yiddish Migration between 1880 and 1940, and finally from the post-World War II immigration from Europe and North Africa to the present day.

What then are the implications of Marsan's *Montreal in Evolution*? History comprises events documented, as well as the methods used to document these events. *Montreal in Evolution* has been hailed as "an excellent and thorough history" by *Choice* magazine, and the *Canadian Historical Review* has claimed that "[t]he breadth of Marsan's theoretical and historical reading is impressive for he attempts to put architectural and planning history into the context of what is known about Montreal's society and economy."[29] Clearly these written accolades give the book an authoritative voice, the potential of being widely distributed and accepted as embodying some sort of relative truth of historical meaning, and, as a matter of course, given a place in the collective memory of architectural historians. *Montreal in Evolution* was first published in French in 1974, translated into English in 1981, and republished in French in 1994. What is perhaps less obvious is the connection between Marsan's work and the political legacy of an insidious biculturalist hegemony which has plagued much of academe in Canada for the past half century, and which has consistently excluded discussion of non-Christian (among others) peoples in Canada. The appropriation of the notion of two solitudes into the architectural text promotes an unsaid vertical hierarchy of power with the two so-called founding nations at the top, creating a type of nationalism based on the idea of two nations rather than one.

All of the authors of the architectural texts discussed in this essay rely on a notion of fixity to establish their historical perspectives. This notion, as outlined by cultural theorist Homi K. Bhabha, is useful in determining a terminology for discussing the role of solitudes, for example, in the construction of national collective identities. As Bhabha points out:

> An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition. Likewise the stereotype, which is its major discursive strategy, is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place,' already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated [...] as if the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual licence of the African that needs no proof, can never really, in discourse be proved.[30]

Like Bhabha's examples of Asian and African stereotypes, the notion of two solitudes in Canada is symptomatic of "what is always 'in place,' already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated" by writers. And to attempt to mend this system by adding successive solitudes to the equation simply perpetuates the faultiness of the existing universalising and essentialising structure. Bhabha's concept of fixity points to the neo-colonial practices of historians who follow this discusive strategy. Who are the two solitudes, the English and the French-speaking inhabitants of Canada, anyway? What is learned from these broad titles that, at once, deny the subjectivity and individuality of every English and French descendant of Canada, while at the same time, they exclude everyone else who does not fall into these categories? At best, the notion of solitudes allows for an understanding that this very concept is inadequate in describing societies which are not static, but rather dynamic, ever-changing, and never stable. While solitudes, by definition, do not interact, human citizens, however, consistently form individual and collective alliances and ruptures within the vicissitudes of daily life.

Politics and culture

Government policies continue evidently to convince authors to link culture with nationalism. The current Minister of Heritage

and former deputy prime minister of Canada, Sheila Copps, pursues a vision of the nation as simultaneously diverse, yet culturally unified through opposition to the United States. Copps speaks consistently through the "we" and "our" of political rhetoric, and as "Arts Arguments" editor of *The Globe and Mail* national newspaper, Carl Wilson, pointed out in January 1999, "The Globe's database has Copps using a dozen variations on the theme "of ensuring that 'we' Canadians can 'tell ourselves our own stories.'"[31] But as Wilson astutely comments:

> Everyone is a member of more than one first-person plurality, based on family, friendships, interests, work, place, race, and nation — all often incompatible [...] In Canada, the nationalist 'we' is a particularly slim premise on which to define culture [...] At best, the 'we' in Copps's formula must be, as linguists say 'contrastive' — us, not as a unit, but as opposed to some Other. That is, to Americans.[32]

But Copps is a politician and her mandate as Minister of Heritage is partly to ensure that Canada has a heritage. Does this heritage, however, have to be connected to an idea of cultural unity? Should architectural historians give credence to a national culture-as-value system that on the surface suggests sameness and shared understanding, yet apparently is divisive? In what seems to be a response to Copps's policy of cultural nationalism, Bloc Québecois Member of Parliament Suzanne Tremblay in discussing the artistic production of Quebec-born singer-songwriter Céline Dion was quoted as saying that "Céline Dion has become an American or universal performer. In her soul, she is neither a Quebecer nor a Canadian. Her songs reflect nothing of what Quebecers experience."[33] This type of reply to Copps's cultural standpoint seems inevitable and dangerously moves towards singling out notions of cultural purity for nationalistic purposes. Rootedness, whether a biological, geographical, or so-called "cultural" one, in Quebec or in Canada, is not a requirement for Canadian citizenship. Whatever Canadian or Quebec culture is cannot be conflated with federal unity if all citizens are to be considered. Otherwise, one politics of the "we" runs into conflict with another politics of the "we," which could in turn collide with another politics of the "we" and so on and so forth. This is one problem of prioritising culture, through a notion of multiculturalism, for purposes of national unity. Commenting on the "we" of anthropological discourse, Virginia Domingues raises doubts about the validity of the notion of culture in contemporary society:

> Such discourses on culture imply that any and all characteristics of the 'collective self' are proper and necessary subjects of societal self-criticism [...] A culturalist argument is implicit in this type of discourse. Asking why it is that 'we' are not 'better,' or 'more stable,' or 'more self-sufficient,' or 'more independent,' or 'more influential,' and framing one's answers in terms of 'culture' implies comparing 'cultures,' seeing culture as something of value, and perpetuating an objectification which is, by definition, a comparative statement of value. What is interesting is that participants in these discourses of collective self-criticism around the world seem to be unwittingly letting that elite European, Eurocentric notion of culture-as-value serve as the preeminent criterion of value.[34]

If, as Domingues suggests, the merit of culture is, in fact, questionable, then it can be said that collective identity, when framed by culture in history writing, perpetuates an established system of beliefs that have remained unquestioned. It seems that the writers on architecture in Canada discussed in this paper have internalised an idea of national culture as the marker of difference, and have taken this notion for granted as something of value. As for politics, movements, such as the campaign for Quebec sovereignty, have frequently been accused of destabilising a consensus of national unity. This is perhaps one reason why Sheila Copps is trying so hard through the use of "we" to unite the country. But have the efforts towards Quebec sovereignty really broken Canadian unity, or have Canadians been led to believe this because they have been taught that one fixed idea of cultural, national, or collective identity is valuable? Perhaps it is the notion of culture itself, and not a perceived sense of any culture in particular, that has elicited fear of federal disintegration. As anthropologist Penelope Harvey remarks: "[I]t is interesting to note that those who feel that the contemporary nation state is in crisis because of the disintegration of political and cultural constituencies are perpetuating a somewhat naive assumption that such integration ever existed."[35] Harvey asks why the so-called Western world has rarely questioned collective unity beyond politically set borders and allowed national culture, by default, to act as the primary source of belonging. Was there ever integration through culture? And is it necessary to achieve integration through culture? Moreover, the idea that multiculturalist policies do something to remedy the universalism of cultural nationalism only camouflages the latter's limitations. Sociologists Segal and Handler state:

> It is only a superficial paradox to say that, ideologically, diversity makes all Canadians alike. Fundamentally, Canadian multiculturalism reemphasizes the homogeneity presupposition of modern nationalism, for in this perspective, the nation remains a bounded collection of individuals who all differ from one another in uniform and acceptable ways and who commonly possess the range of difference present in Canada.[36]

The view of Canada, therefore, as multicultural, yet culturally monolithic, is dubious, for within this notion lie latent tensions between processes of unification and differentiation.

Post-colonization

The unspecified "we" indicates a subjective voice which attempts to be universal and, as a final goal, coerces objectivity. By contrast, one alternative to this method of writing is the use of the term "I," which would foreground the particular subjective perspective of an author of history. Yet, in the course of writing this essay, I have become aware of certain dangers in assuming that the "I" is a simple antidote to the problem of humanist universality. The risk of essentialism, for example, is potent. Art historian and theorist Keith Moxey writes:

> The introduction of the personal into a discursive practice such as historical writing can often constitute a form of essentialism, a way to posit a direct connection between an author and his or her text. In this scenario, the introduction of the personal serves to ground the narrative in the author's experience, in such a way as to make the intimate bond between subjectivity and memory serve as an unassailable foundation for the views being presented. On this view, for example, only African-Americans can represent the views of African-Americans, and only women can articulate feminist agendas.[37]

In this essay, what I want to avoid is the placement of my work into fixed classifications, so as not to be dismissed as belonging to some "other" academic discipline where issues only apply to "them." My subjective "I" is a position which is neither fixed, nor permanent, as I proceed in my own constructions (while at the same time, my already constructed views are being reconstructed) in the ongoing process of historiographical analysis.

In conclusion, I have tried to demonstrate that the use of the ambiguous and unspecified shifters "we" and "our," when employed in the context of national "culture," in which architecture is often placed, results in a tension between notions of identity as either stable or dynamic. My goal, however, is not generally to avoid using the "we" in the hope of avoiding problems arising from it, since the "we," if qualified with the recognition of specificity and transience, can unite, empower, and liberate individuals from oppression. Moxey, for example, uses the "we" to represent those involved in politically inspired forms of interpretation and writes:

> If subjectivity is conceived of as something unstable and changing rather than transcendental and constant, then human knowledge can no longer be viewed as something fixed and permanent. Instead of regarding knowledge as an edifice to which positivistic scholarship can continue to contribute so that the scope of its insights might continue to expand and evolve according to generally accepted universal principles, *we* live in an age that questions the very basis on which that structure was erected [emphasis mine].[38]

My wish, by discussing the politics of the "we," is to make structures and assumptions explicit, so that I can analyse, reflect on, and, where I believe necessary, effect some sort of change. In the case of academic writing on architecture, I hope for the replacement of the unspecified "we" with the relatively less ambiguous "I," and from that foundation, a move towards creating non-nationalistic paradigms of analysis that comprise sets of problematics rather than homogenising categories. This is not to suggest a free-for-all of meaning, where every subjective "I" interpretation of history is of equal relevance, but rather a recognition that history creates many opportunities to mean.

NOTES

1 Robert S. Nelson, "The Map of Art History," *Art Bulletin* 79, no.1 (1997): 28-40.

2 Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 66.

3 Anthony D. Smith, "Nationalism and the Historians," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 33, nos.1-2 (1992): 58-80.

4 Basil Hatim, *Communication Across Cultures: Translation Theory and Contrastive Text Linguistics* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 117.

5 See W. L. Morton, *The Critical Years: The Union of British North America*, 1857-1873 (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart Limited, 1964), 235-237.

6 A.H. Chapman, "Architectural Development in Canada," in *Documents in Canadian Architecture*, ed. Geoffrey Simmins (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1992), 138-140.

7 Alfred Hirschfelder Chapman was born of an English-born father and a Canadian-born mother. See Howard D. Chapman, *Alfred Chapman: The Man and his work* (Toronto: Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, Toronto Region Branch, 1978).

8 Chapman, "Architectural Development in Canada,"140.

9 Marianna Torgovnick, "Politics of the 'We,'" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 91, no.1 (1992): 59.

10 Alan Gowans, *Building Canada: An Architectural History of Canadian Life* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966), xviii.

11 Ibid., 178-179.

12 Ibid., 177.

13 Ibid., 179.

14 Bronwen Ledger, quoted in Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture* (Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford University Press, 1994), backcover.

15 Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, vii-viii.

16 Ibid., 869.

17 Ibid.

18 Torgovnick, "Politics of the 'We,'"48.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

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