

CROSSING BORDERS OF HYBRIDITY BEYOND MARGINALITY AND IDENTITY

Keywords: *hybridity; otherness; identity politics; cultural alterity; transitional cultures.*

Abstract: *Transition concepts such as ‘hybridity’, ‘alterity’, ‘diaspora’, ‘creolization’, ‘transculturalization’ and ‘syncretism’ have to an increasing extent become key concepts in various attempts at escaping the problems of suppression and exclusion involved in notions of purity, be it the purity of race or culture. The purpose of this paper is to focus on the concepts of cultural transition and to try to develop conceptual spaces within which it is possible to grasp and to study cultural identity without resorting to cultural essentialism. The paper explores the concept of hybridity and its uses in divergent and related fields, besides a critique of assumptions (those of purity, of marginality and identity). A discussion of cultural alterity, identity, diffusion and race leads to consideration of how syncretism and hybridity seem to do duty as terms for the management of the more esoteric cultural aspects of colonialism. It also focuses on cultural creativity – innovation and authenticity, ownership of cultural forms, and of technological modes of cultural mix. This links hybridity to more explicit political terminologies and constructs hybrid artefacts as commodities of difference in the context of culture. From an analytical perspective, the paper emphasizes the complexities of the power in transitions as well as in constructions of essentialist identities. We need to move beyond the limitations of both identity politics and the critique of essentialism without losing sight of the commitment to social and cultural critique. Focusing on the concept of hybridity, I argue that we should not only be concerned with what is hybridity, but also how are the notions of and distinctions between transition and purity applied, by whom, to what ends and articulated with which other elements. Turning the concepts of transition into analytical, rather than descriptive, they will open up new fields of study and new possibilities for critique.*

The Rhetoric of Hybridity

Transitional concepts do not have some inherently critical function. They can be applied to serve various interests just as it is the case of the idea of purity. Hence, we should always be attentive to the question of whose interests are served by articulating identity in terms of ‘hybridity’, rather than ‘purity’ in specific instances. The point in focusing on hybridity is not just that it directs attention towards the naturalizations of relations of power that discourses of *purity* imply. We also need to focus on the very complex struggles over power, identity and legitimate enunciative positions that are involved in discourses of transition or ‘impurity’. Therefore, we should perhaps ask how

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'hybridity' and 'purity' are made objects of knowledge, by whom and with which kinds of consequences. We should ask questions, such as: Where and how is the line between the hybrid and the pure drawn in specific contexts? Which conventional understandings of cultural difference organize the distribution of purity and impurity? Who has the power to define oneself or others as hybrid or 'impure'? This is why I argue that we need an analytics of hybridity in order to draw attention to the huge variety of ways in which distinctions between the pure and the impure intersect with dominant and subversive local and historical discourses and relations of power.

In recent social and cultural theory, transitional concepts are used against the privilege of purity and to focus on the experience of the migrant and the exile as a particularly privileged experience by virtue of their hybrid position 'on the margin' or 'inbetween' cultures. In the words of Stuart Hall: "You have to be familiar enough with it [the centre] to know how to move in it. But you have to be sufficiently outside it, so you can examine it and critically interrogate it. And it is this double move or, what I think one writer after another have called, the double consciousness of the exile, of the migrant, of the stranger who moves to another place, who has this double way of seeing it, from the inside and the outside" (Hall 381). In effect, it is common for the marginalized people perceived as 'others', to develop a 'double consciousness' in the process of cultural hybridization.

Furthermore, W.E.B. Du Bois's conception of 'double consciousness' emphasizes that the formation of self-perception and collective racial identity is historically situated. The duality of consciousness appears to indicate a fragmented psychic space where marginalized people are able to resist and re-appropriate hegemonic forces. Stuart Hall points out that cultural identity is "not an essence but a *positioning*. Hence, there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position, which has no absolute guarantee in an unproblematic transcendent 'law of origin'" (Hall 397). To a certain degree, Du Bois's conception of 'double consciousness' appears to also reflect Hegelian dialectics. After all, the formation of double consciousness is a dynamic and never ending process striving to remove varied 'veils' that inhibit true self-understanding in order to re-integrate one's consciousness. However, the attainment of true self-understanding does not suggest a consummation of one's self identity. Just as cultural hybridization "is not 'free' oscillation between or among chosen identities", the 'doubling' of one's consciousness cannot be 'free' from the critical awareness of one's vulnerability. Hence, the formation of double consciousness is not simply a cognitive process of constructing self-knowledge or self-identity. Rather, Du Bois's conception of double consciousness embraces a human reflexivity (a volitional human activity) that questions self as a supreme being. In short, the formation of double consciousness is a nexus of interconnected processes of generating and re-generating dialogical human relationships.

Hybridity as a Cultural Mixture

Hybridity is considered as being transitive in two directions, de-territorializing and re-territorializing its mode of signification. With hybridity, anything is possible for the simple reason that hybridity is about making meaning without the repression of a pre-

existing normativity or teleology: in the anomie between ‘having been deterritorialized’ and ‘awaiting to be reterritorialized’ there is all manner of unprecedented ‘becoming’. Gloria Anzaldúa argues in *The New Mestiza* that “we are all mixtures” (qtd. in Leitch et al. 2208) and it is with the help of those who live in the borderlands and “continually walk out of one culture and into another” (Anzaldúa 2212) that we can recognize what it might take to achieve an anti-racist consciousness. Those who dwell in what Bhabha refers to as a ‘third space’ or in what Anzaldúa calls ‘the borderlands’ require to give up the binary approaches (*us versus them, white versus non-white, self versus other, dominant versus dominated, hybridity versus cultural alterity*). People of mixed race are often ‘cultural hybrids’ whose double consciousness or multiple belongings seem obvious particularly in a world still conditioned by structures to ensure racial purity: “The future belongs to the *mestiza* (woman of mixed race, hybrid). Because the future depends on the breaking down of paradigms, it depends on the straddling of two or more cultures. By creating a new mythos – that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves and the ways we behave – *la mestiza* creates a new consciousness” (Anzaldúa 2214).

The celebration of the privileged experience of the hybrid has been the object of fierce critique. One point of critique consists in calling attention to the fact that speaking of ‘mixture’ presupposes the existence of something that can be mixed. A counterargument could be that hybridity is not about mixture *per se*, since purity never existed anyway. Rather, hybridity is about displacement. That is, focusing on hybridity involves focusing on ‘positioning’, rather than on ‘mixing’ of cultural forms. It involves focusing on the relation between the ‘centre’ and the ‘margin’ in one way or another, be it the relation between the West and the rest or between majority and minority. And it involves focusing on how the penetration of the centre by the marginalized undermines the naturalized dominant position of the centre. Hybridity is about the introduction of ‘otherness’ – in terms of an ‘impurity’ that contaminates, disturbs and displaces the idea of purity. And the migrant’s insistence on belonging in the centre is a very concrete example of this.

In its most recent descriptive and realist usage, hybridity appears as a convenient category at ‘the edge’ or contact point of diaspora, describing cultural mixture where the diasporized meets the host in the scene of migration. Nikos Papastergiadis makes this link at the start of his book, *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization and Hybridity*, where he mentions the “twin processes of globalization and migration” (Papastergiadis 3). He outlines a development which moves from the assimilation and integration of migrants into the host society of the nation-state towards something more complex in the metropolitan societies of today. Speaking primarily of Europe, the Americas and Australia, Papastergiadis states that as some members of migrant communities came to prominence “within the cultural and political circles of the dominant society” they “began to argue in favour of new models of representing the process of cultural interaction, and to demonstrate the negative consequences of insisting upon the denial of the emergent forms of cultural identity” (Papastergiadis 3). Hybridity has been a key part of this new modeling, and so it is logically entwined within the coordinates of migrant identity and difference, same or not same, host and guest.

Worrying that assertions of identity and difference are celebrated too quickly as resistance, in either the nostalgic form of 'traditional survivals' or mixed in a 'new world of hybrid forms' (Clifford 103), Clifford sets up an opposition (tradition/hybrid) that will become central to our critique of the terms. There is much more that hybridity seems to contain: "A quick glance at the history of hybridity reveals a bizarre array of ideas" (Papastergiadis 169). In addition to the general positions set out above, hybridity is an evocative term for the formation of identity; it is a code for creativity and for translation. In Bhabha's terms 'hybridity is camouflage' (Bhabha 193) and, provocatively he offers 'hybridity as heresy' (Bhabha 226), as a disruptive and productive category. It is "how newness enters the world" (Bhabha 227) and it is bound up with a "process of translating and transvaluing cultural differences" (Bhabha 252).

With relation to diaspora, the most conventional accounts assert hybridity as the process of cultural mixing where the diasporic arrivals adopt aspects of the host culture and rework, reform and reconfigure this in production of a new hybrid culture or 'hybrid identities' (Chambers 50). Whether talk of such identities is coherent or not (this question needs to be asked) hybridity is better conceived of as a process. Kobena Mercer writes of 'the hybridized terrain of diasporic culture' (Mercer 254) and even the older terminologies of syncretism and mixture evoke the movement of 'hybridization' rather than a stress on fixed identity. Finally, the volume *Hybridity and its Discontents* is able to describe hybridity as: "a term for a wide range of social and cultural phenomenon involving 'mixing', [it] has become a key concept within cultural criticism and post-colonial theory" (Brah and Coombs 45).

Even as a process in translation or in formation, the idea of 'hybrid identities' (Chambers 50) relies upon the proposition of non-hybridity. Hybridity theorists have had to grapple with this problem with a revealing degree of agitation. Gilroy, for example, has moved away from an allegiance to hybridity and declared:

... the idea of hybridity, of intermixture, presupposes two anterior purities... I think there isn't any purity; there isn't any anterior purity... that's why I try not to use the word hybrid ... Cultural production is not like mixing cocktails. (Gilroy 54-55)

Gilroy clearly recognizes the problem of purity when he laments "the lack of a means of adequately describing, let alone theorizing, intermixture, fusion and syncretism without suggesting the existence of anterior 'uncontaminated' purities" (Gilroy 250). In this respect, the descriptive use of hybridity evokes, counterfactually, a stable and prior non-mixed position, to which "presumably it might one day be possible to return" (Gilroy 250). Gilroy continues, this time with the arguments of Young firmly in his sight:

Whether the process of mixture is presented as fatal or redemptive, we must be prepared to give up the illusion that cultural and ethnic purity has ever existed, let alone provided a foundation for civil society. The absence of an adequate conceptual and critical language is undermined and complicated by the absurd charge that attempts to employ the concept of hybridity are completely undone by the active residues of that term's articulation within the technical vocabularies of nineteenth-century racial science. (Gilroy 250-251)

Hall also reacts, naming Young, admittedly in defense against an even more sweeping condemnation of postcolonial theory, yet significantly with the penultimate words of a volume entitled *The Postcolonial Question*, where he writes:

a very similar line of argument is to be found... [in] the inexplicably simplistic charge in Robert Young's *Colonial Desire* (1995) that the post-colonial critics are 'complicit' with Victorian racial theory because both sets of writers deploy the same term – hybridity – in their discourse. (Hall 259)

Interestingly, the term 'culture clash' was used by anthropological critics of Western imperialism, though again with a culturalist bent that was less concerned with political redress than with management of 'relations'. The very idea of cultural survival through fusion, mixture, miscegenation, creolization, provoked a clash among the great and the good of colonial rule, and much energy has subsequently been expended attempting to unravel the violent consequences of a paranoid 'first contact'.

The initial use of the term hybridity in wider discourse was as a stigma in association with colonial ideas about racial purity and a horror of miscegenation. In the colonial experience the children of white male colonizers and female 'native' peoples were assigned a different (and inferior) status in colonial society (a society which refused to even consider the possibility of white women with black men). The driving imperative is to save centred, bounded and coherent identities: placed identities for placeless times. This calls the search for purity and purified identity. Purified identities are constructed through the purification of space, through the maintenance of the territorial boundaries and frontiers. We can also talk of 'a geography of rejection which appears to correspond to the purity of antagonistic communities' (Sibley 410). Purified identities are also at the heart of empire. Purification aims to secure both protection from and positional superiority over, the external Other. Anxiety and power feed off each other. In this case, William Connolly argues:

When you remain within the established field of identity and difference, you become a bearer of strategies to protect identity through devaluation of the other; but if you transcend the field of identities through which the other is constituted, you lose the identity and standing needed to communicate with those you sought to inform. Identity and difference are bound together. It is impossible to reconstitute the relation to the second without confounding the experience of the first. (Connolly 329)

Jennifer DeVere Brody suggests that "purity is impossible and, in fact, every mention of the related term hybrid, only confirms a strategic taxonomy that constructs purity as a prior (fictive) ground" (DeVere Brody 11-12). In apprehending concepts like 'whiteness', 'authenticity' and 'Englishness' as radically unstable and haunted by the very terms they disavow, both Young and Brody insist on the possibilities of contradiction, resistance and even subversion within hybridity.

The crossing of boundaries brings about a complexity of vision and also a sense of the permeability and contingency of cultures. It allows us "to see others not as

ontologically given but as historically constituted” and, thus, can “erode the exclusivist biases we so often ascribe to cultures, our own not least” (Said 225). Thus, the colonial discourse acts as a bearer of identity. In constructing identity, Paul Ricoeur suggests that:

When we discover that there are several cultures instead of just one and consequently at the time when we acknowledge the end of a sort of cultural monopoly, be it illusory or real, we are threatened with the destruction of our discovery. Suddenly, it becomes possible that there are just others, that we are ourselves an ‘other’ among others. (Ricoeur 278)

In conclusion, hybridity can be articulated in many different ways, depending on the context and on who defines the situation: it can be seen as a threatening contamination of a much valued purity; it can be seen as a creative mixture of disparate cultural elements; it can be seen as a subversive insistence on equality through difference – displacing the ‘givenness’ of the centred perspective; and it can be seen as yet another strategy for upholding existing power relations. Therefore, the act of replacing ‘purity talk’ with ‘hybridity talk’ also has very different power effects, depending on the context and who defines the situation. The rhetoric of hybridity or the *hybrid talk* is fundamentally associated with the emergence of postcolonial discourse and its critiques of cultural imperialism. This stage in the history of hybridity is characterized by literature and theory that focuses on the effects of mixture upon identity and culture.

The ‘Third Space’ of Hybridity

The third space of hybridity is uniquely authentic. *Cultural hybridity* raises the questions for notions of cultural authenticity, which is often thought to be the sole preserve of cultures endorsing the fixed tablet of tradition. Authenticity and hybridity are not opposites, but are natural extensions of each other. Hybridity produces new forms of authenticity and is inherent in processes of social and cultural dynamics in which various cultures confront each other. A second sharp contrast between cultures in the fixed tablet of tradition and hybrids is the notion of choice in cultural referent. This choice is significant because in cultural hybrids, traditions are loosened, and the capacity to make choices allowed. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi Bhabha analyses the liminality of hybridity as a paradigm of colonial anxiety. He uses liminality, like hybridity, to refer to the moment or place of untranslatability, the limit where a thing becomes its alterity. His key argument is that colonial hybridity, as a cultural form, produced ambivalence in the colonial masters and as such altered the authority of power. Opposing the notion of colonial power as a textual construct, Benita Parry warns instead that hybridity should not automatically be read as a sign of the inherent instability of colonial authority, arguing that “the traces of uncertainty which are discernable in some colonial writing should be read as a troubled response to the colonial condition, but not as attesting to the fragility of imperial rule”.

Bhabha posits hybridity as such a form of liminal or in-between space, where the “cutting edge of translation and negotiation” (Bhabha 89) occurs and which he terms the

third space. This is a space intrinsically critical of essentialist positions of identity and a conceptualization of “original or originary culture”:

For me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the ‘Third Space’, which enables other positions to emerge. (Rutherford 211)

Thus, the third space is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a *productive*, and not merely reflective, space that engenders new *possibility*. It is an “interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative” (Bhabha 103) space of new forms of cultural meaning and production blurring the limitations of existing boundaries and calling into question established categorizations of culture and identity. According to Bhabha, this hybrid third space is an *ambivalent* site where cultural meaning and representation have no ‘primordial unity or fixity’ (Bhabha 176). The concept of the third space is submitted as useful for analyzing the enunciation, transgression and subversion of dualistic categories going beyond the realm of colonial binary thinking and oppositional positioning. Despite the exposure of the third space to contradictions and ambiguities, it provides a spatial politics of inclusion rather than exclusion that “initiates new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation” (Bhabha 1). The *hybrid identity* is positioned within this third space, as ‘lubricant’ (Papastergiadis 56) in the conjunction of cultures. The hybrid’s potential is with their innate knowledge of ‘transculturation’ (Taylor, 1991), of transition, their ability to transverse both cultures and to translate, negotiate and mediate affinity and difference within a dynamic of exchange and inclusion. They have encoded within them a counter hegemonic agency. At the point at which the coloniser presents a normalizing, hegemonic practice, the hybrid strategy opens up a third space of/for rearticulating negotiation and meaning.

One of the most disputed terms in postcolonial studies, ‘hybridity’ commonly refers to “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization” (Ashcroft 118). Hybridization takes many forms including cultural, political and linguistic¹. In this respect, Robert Young has remarked that at the turn of the century, ‘hybridity’ had become part of a colonialist discourse of racism. Moreover, Ashcroft sustains how “hybridity and the power it releases may well be seen as the characteristic feature and contribution of the post-colonial, allowing a means of evading the replication of the binary categories of the past and developing new anti-monolithic models of cultural exchange and growth” (Ashcroft 183).

On the contrary, Papastergiadis reminds us of the emancipative potential of negative terms. He poses the following question: “should we use only words with a pure and inoffensive history, or should we challenge essentialist models of identity by taking on and then subverting their own vocabulary?” (Papastergiadis 258). This question

¹ What is hybridization?, Bakhtin asks: “It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousness, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation, or by some other factor” (Bakhtin 34).

transforms the concept of hybridity into a “celebrated and privileged kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-betweenness, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference” (Hoogvelt 158). This is particularly so in Bhabha’s discussion of cultural hybridity. Bhabha has developed his concept of hybridity from literary and cultural theory to describe the construction of culture and identity within conditions of colonial antagonism and inequity. For Bhabha, hybridity is the process by which the colonial governing authority undertakes to translate the identity of the colonised (the *Other*) within a singular universal framework, but then fails producing something familiar but new. He contends that a new hybrid identity or subject-position emerges from the interweaving of elements of the coloniser and colonised challenging the validity and authenticity of any essentialist cultural identity. In this respect, hybridity is positioned as an antidote to essentialism, or “the belief in invariable and fixed properties which define the ‘whatness’ of a given entity.” (Fuss xi). Bhabha himself is aware of the dangers of fixity and fetishism of identities within binary colonial thinking arguing that “all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity” (Rutherford 211). His critique of cultural imperialist hybridity meant that the rhetoric of hybridity became more concerned with challenging essentialism and has been applied to sociological theories of identity, multiculturalism, and racism. Within European culture, the construction of *Otherness* has its own history, developing a model of ‘travelling cultures’. There is also a nostalgic attempt to revivify pure and indigenous regional cultures in reaction against what are perceived as threatening forms of cultural hybridity. Moreover, Bhabha stresses the interdependence of coloniser and colonized, in terms of hybridity. In accepting this argument, we begin to understand why claims to the inherent purity and originality of cultures are ‘untenable’, urging us into this space in an effort to open up the notion of an international culture “not based on exoticism or multiculturalism of the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity” (Bhabha 109). In bringing this to the next stage, Bhabha hopes that it is in this space “that we will find those words with which we can speak of ourselves and others. And by exploring this ‘Third Space’, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves”. He goes as far as to see this imperial delirium forming gaps within the English text, gaps which are:

...the signs of a discontinuous history, an estrangement of the English book. They mark the disturbance of its authoritative representations by the uncanny forces of race, sexuality, violence, cultural and even climatic differences which emerge in the colonial discourse as the mixed and split texts of hybridity. If the English book is read as a production of hybridity, then it no longer simply commands authority. (Bhabha 78)

His analysis, which is largely based on the Lacanian conceptualization of mimicry as camouflage focuses on colonial ambivalence. On the one hand, he sees the colonizer as a snake in the grass who speaks in “a tongue that is forked,” and produces a mimetic representation that “...emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge” (Bhabha 85). Bhabha argues that hybridity subverts the narratives of colonial power and dominant cultures. The series of inclusions and

exclusions are deconstructed by the very entry of the formerly-excluded subjects into the mainstream discourse. The dominant culture is contaminated by the linguistic and racial differences of the native self.

Hybridity can thus be seen, in Bhabha's interpretation, as a counter-narrative, a critique of the canon and its exclusion of other narratives. In other words, the hybridity-acclaimers want to suggest first, that the colonialist discourse's ambivalence is a conspicuous illustration of its uncertainty; and second, that the migration of yesterday's 'savages' from their peripheral spaces to the homes of their 'masters' underlies a blessing invasion that, by 'Third-Worlding' the center, creates 'fissures' within the very structures that sustain it.

Doubling, Hybridity and Métissage

The mutability of métissage provides perhaps the most telling perspective on the capacity of its 'neither/nor' paradigm to subvert and transform the hierarchical binaries on which the colonial encounter were largely predicated. During the nineteenth century, the birth of so-called 'scientific racism' posited the notion of the hybrid as monstrous, degenerate, the very incarnation of infertility. This is a point that Françoise Lionnet makes well in her 'Introduction' to her book *Autobiographical Voices*: "Racial and cultural 'mixing' has always been a fact of reality, however fearfully unacknowledged ... It is in large part because of the scientific racism of the nineteenth century that hybridization became coded as a negative category" (Lionnet 9). This insistence on racial and cultural purity thus coded the hybrid as unnatural and degenerate, a product of the colonial condition that betrayed longstanding principles of ethnic and cultural purity. But these principles, used to bolster the tremendous expansion of European colonial activity in the latter half of the nineteenth century, carried within them both the seeds of their eventual destruction and the instantiation of ethnicity as a category beyond 'race'. Over the long term, the transformative power of métissage would become proleptic rather than analeptic, a form of identitarian inscription whose full potential would come to be realized in a wider postcolonial future rather than in a univocal colonial past. In denying the dominant notions of ethnic and cultural separation, métissage draws transformatively on these essentialist notions of discursive division. The principle of anxiety that grounds the colonial network of hierarchical oppositions is thus made to confront the return of its own repressed Other; the unnamable sterile monster of the infertile hybrid now marks a site of strategic multiplicity, engendering a third term which is less than either one but simultaneously more than the sum of both. What was once the stereotypically hideous métis, transformed through its corollary of a creolized culture of difference, now denotes a viable alternative to the negative colonial myth of binary otherness.

Patterns of Hybridity

If hybridity had always seemed eccentric, idiosyncratic and abnormal within canonical identity regimes and modes of representation, now in the rapidly emerging historiographies of the diaspora, identity would appear to have found its 'proper' home

and its ideal semantic register. But such a claim is in a sense ‘always already’ scandalous for the very simple reason that the very idea of a proper and non-contingent home in the diaspora is fundamentally contradictory. For after all, what is the diaspora if not the denaturalization of ‘home’ by the concept of ‘location’? Caught up in a constitutive ‘between-ness’, the diaspora imagines home in opposition to discourses of ontological authenticity and domestic propriety. It is precisely to the extent that home is not natural that the diaspora is able to perform and inaugurate its representations of home as radical and incorrigible ‘lack’. It is only by insisting on the integrity of its locational and phenomenological immanence that the diaspora can dwell in the ‘hyphen’ without succumbing the seductions of ‘the here and now’ as temporalized by mainstream discourses of assimilation.

Diasporic Hybridity

The creative production of *diasporic hybridity* has to take the form of a delicate double-matter: denial and appropriation as such in the name of a perennial ‘homelessness’ and at the same time engaging in the polemical politics of representation. Characterized by a symptomatic ‘double consciousness’, diasporic hybridity has to both ‘enjoy itself as symptom’ and simultaneously transform the political body where it resides as ‘symptom’.

The semanticization of hybridity is synchronous with the ‘dislodging’ of metropolitan normativity by postcolonial double consciousness. It is from within this space of epistemic incommensurability and socio-cultural and political asymmetry that diasporic hybridity needs to express itself as ‘speaking’ and as ‘speaking for’ while realizing itself as an open and ongoing constituency. For indeed, the diasporic hybrid subject has the difficult double task of opening up hybridity as an allegorical and second-order space even as it envisions to empower forms of hybridity in the name of historical contingency. The political project of *diasporic hybridity* takes the form of a question: *Who am I* and *Who are We?* To be even more specific, the diasporic subject has to learn to reinvent the political as a discourse of open-ended questions. The diasporic subject has to learn to invent and imagine community along multiple non-totalizable axes and cultivate tactics of resisting representation from within the field of representation. For if representation has already been spoken for in the name of dominance, it is only appropriate that the diasporic subject should cultivate strategies and protocols of resistance to resist ‘being had’ by regimes of representation. And yet, ‘speak for’, it must but without the finality of representational and representative *hybris*. I would go so far as to say that the diasporic hybrid conjuncture is the site where the epistemological finding that ‘representation no longer exists’ negotiates with the political truth that ‘there is no reality without representation’. Furthermore, in complicating the passage from the ‘I’ to the ‘we’ and in refusing to acknowledge the individual in a pre-given collectivity, the subject of diasporic hybridity remains open and autonomizes the space of the hyphen that aligns the ‘ethical’ and the ‘political’ within the category of ‘the ethico-political’. According to anti-hybridity arguments, hybridity is inauthentic and ‘multiculturalism lite’. Examining these arguments provides an opportunity to deepen and fine-tune our

perspective. What is missing in the anti-hybridity arguments is historical depth. Hybridity is a problem only from the point of view of essentializing boundaries. What hybridity means varies not only over time but also in different cultures, and this informs different patterns of hybridity.

In cultural studies hybridity denotes a wide register of multiple identity, cross-over, boundary-crossing experiences and styles, matching a world of growing migration and diaspora lives, intensive intercultural communication, multiculturalism and erosion of boundaries. “Hybrids were conceived as lubricants in the clashes of culture; they were the negotiators who would secure a future free of xenophobia” (Papastergiadis 261). This angle, which is both instrumental and celebratory, may overlook that hybridity is also significant in its own right, as the experience of hybrids.

The first point to consider is the varieties of hybridity, as phenomena and as perspective. Hybridity first entered social science via anthropology of religion, through the theme of syncretism. Roger Bastide defined syncretism as “uniting pieces of the mythical history of two different traditions in one that continued to be ordered by a single system” (Bastide 23). Presently, the main thrust of hybridity thinking concerns cultural hybridity. At another level the argument of anti-hybridity reflects unease with multiculturalism. Among the fundamental considerations that are missing in the anti-hybridity back-lash is the historical depth of hybridity viewed on a long term. Population movements, cross-cultural trade, intercultural contact and intermarriage have been common throughout history. We can think of hybridity as *layered* in history, including pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial layers, each with distinct sets of hybridity, as a function of the boundaries that were prominent. For colonizing countries, these are pre-colonial, imperial and post-imperial periods. Superimposed upon the deep strata of mixing in evolutionary time are historical episodes of long-distance cross-cultural trade, conquest and empire, and specific episodes such as trans-Atlantic slavery and the triangular trade.

Within the above mentioned levels, we can distinguish further types of hybridity:

Hybridity *across modes of production* (this gives rise to mixed social formations);

Hybridity *before and after industrialization*;

Hybrid *modes of regulation* (besides nations with overtly hybrid identities, there are hybrid regions or zones that straddle geographic and cultural areas)

‘Organic’ versus ‘Intentional’ Hybridity

While transgression is a potential tool of resistance which upturns taken-for-granted hierarchies, hybridity plays dangerously on the boundary and taken out of context can become a source of dichotomies, especially for postcolonial diasporas struggling for recognition. In his fundamental distinction between ‘organic’ and ‘intentional’ hybridity, Bakhtin refers to ‘organic hybridity’ as: “unintentional, unconscious hybridization (...), as one of the most important modes in the historical life and evolution of languages. We may even say that language and languages change historically primarily by means of hybridization, by means of mixing of various ‘languages’” (Bakhtin 358). In such

situations of mixing, Bakhtin goes on to say, “the mixture remains mute and opaque, never making use of conscious contrasts and oppositions... [Yet] such unconscious hybrids have been at the same time profoundly productive historically: they are pregnant with potential for new world views, with new ‘internal forms’ for perceiving the world” (Bakhtin 360).

In his analysis, Gluckman recognizes that as conflicts between black and white sharpened, new configurations of existing cultures tended to surface as means of social and political mobilizations which stressed cultural difference, an argument that later came to be known as ‘political ethnicity’ (Gluckman 61). Yet, such social movements, even when they announce their cultural purity and sharp distinction, are necessarily hybrid culturally, since they arise from within the new social and cultural configurations of the historically transformed, organically hybridized community. This ambivalence between white and black, the unstable meanings, the hybridity of the so-called bridge ceremony, did not simply derive from the fusing of disparate cultural elements, each bearing its own fixed cultural meaning. As Bhabha insightfully recognizes, hybridity may be produced by a ‘doubling up of the sign’, a ‘splitting’ which is ‘less than one and double’ (Bhabha 119). The same object or custom placed in a different context acquires quite new meanings, while echoing old ones. In this sense, hybridity is unconscious, yet disturbing and interruptive. It renders colonial authority, ambivalent and uncertain.

According to Bakhtin, “an intentional hybrid is first of all a *conscious* hybrid” (Bakhtin 359), that is, “an encounter within the area of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousness, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor” (Bakhtin 358). Hence, the intentional hybrid is not only an individualized mixing of two socio-linguistic consciousnesses, but “the collision between differing points of view on the world that are embedded in these forms” (Bakhtin 360). Intentional hybrids are thus ‘inevitably dialogical’ (Bakhtin 360). Bakhtin argues, moreover, that such intentional hybrids are ‘double voiced’ (Bakhtin 361), encapsulated within the framework of a single utterance. Similarly Bhabha drawing on Derrida, also stresses the performative dimensions of cultural enunciation: “*the place of utterance* – is crossed by the difference of writing... [which ensures] that meaning is never simply mimetic and transparent” (Bhabha 36). Thus, the ceremonial opening of the bridge defines a liminal space in which both intentional and organic hybridities, conscious and unconscious, are played out. Seen from Bhabha’s perspective, both types of hybridity (he does not distinguish them) frame the already mentioned ‘third space’ in which the ambivalences of the colonial encounter are enacted.

As elucidated by Homi Bhabha, the notion of hybridity is deployed as part of an oppositional critical paradigm to colonialist epistemologies and represents an attempt to counter the homogenizing and reductive tendencies of such Manichean dualisms as that of colonizer and colonized. Colonial discourse, working through the process of disavowal to establish the unity of the colonizing subject and the full presence of colonial power, is hybridized since the alterity that is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different. The trace and language of the ‘Other’ are in this way inscribed in colonial discourse. The effect of hybridization is an ambivalence which renders the absolute

nature of colonial mastery, attesting instead to its fundamental instability. As Bhabha puts it in *The Location of Culture*, “hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other ‘denied’ knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority – its rules of recognition” (Bhabha 114). In so questioning the unvarying manifestation of the relationship between colonizing subject and colonized ‘Other’ as unidirectional and hierarchical, hybridity clears the conceptual space needed for the operation of resistance.

Cultural Identity and Diaspora

Models of Cultural Identity

It is generally agreed that people can have multiple identities. There are various models of observing any hierarchical pattern to how these identities are displayed as well as the interaction between them. One can distinguish between *nested identities* (conceived as concentric circles), *‘marble-cake’ type identities* (that cannot be separated on different levels and where components influence each other), *cross-cutting*, or *separate*. Although individuals may have multiple identities, specific contexts and circumstances dictate which identity becomes more important (to the extent that it takes primacy over any other) at a particular time. The nature of the relationship between different identities is dictated by the categories those identities belong to. One can distinguish between *contrasting* and *non-contrasting identities*: the first type accounts for the identification with groups belonging to the same category, while the latter refers to groups belonging to different categories.

David Winterstein describes the four primary axes that allow cultural identities to form. The first axis is “*inclusion*, a set of attributes that an individual uses to associate and communicate with a group; the second is *exclusion*, the ensemble of means by which the group differentiates itself from others; the third defines and tests a *point of identification* within a culture’s value system and continues to do so over generations; and the fourth axis is related to *space*, which helps to associate a cultural group with a specific territory” (Winterstein 123). Implied within these four axes are the cultural norms and meanings that work together to create the phenomena known as *cultural identity*.

Stuart Hall’s thesis is that rather than thinking of identity as an “already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent” (Hall 145), we should think instead of “identity as a ‘production’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (Hall 167). Hall points out that there are two principal ways of thinking about (cultural) identity. The traditional model views identity:

...in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective ‘one true self, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed ‘selves’, which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common... This ‘oneness’, underlying all the other, more superficial differences, is the truth, the essence of ‘Caribbeanness’, of the black experience. It is this identity which a Caribbean or black diaspora must discover, excavate, bring to light and express... (Hall, 1996: 393)

Hall acknowledges that the “rediscovery of this identity is often the object of what Frantz Fanon once called a ‘passionate research’” and that such a “conception of cultural identity played a crucial role in all post-colonial struggles” (Hall 400). However, he questions whether such a view merely entails “unearthing that which the colonial experience buried and overlaid”. For Hall, however, it is better to envision a “quite different practice, one based on ‘not the rediscovery but the *production* of identity’. Not an identity grounded in the archaeology, but in the *re-telling* of the past” (Hall 423). Such a viewpoint would entail acknowledging that this is an “act of imaginative rediscovery” (Hall 425), one which involves “imposing an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation, which is the history of all enforced diasporas” and leads to the restoration of an “imaginary fullness or plentitude, to set against the broken rubric of our past” (Hall 428). Africa, he stresses, is the “name of the missing term, (...) which lies at the centre of our cultural identity and gives it a meaning which, until recently, it lacked” (Hall 432).

The second model of (cultural) identity (which Hall favors) acknowledges the “critical points of deep and significant *difference* which constitute ‘what we really are’; or rather-since history has intervened-‘what we have become’”. From this point of view, cultural identity is a:

...matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in mere ‘recovery’ of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (Hall 394)

Drawing upon the work of Michel Foucault and Edward Said, Hall argues that recognition must follow the “ways in which black people, black experiences, were positioned and subject-ed in the dominant regimes of representation” (Hall 390), these latter being the “effects of a critical exercise of cultural power and normalization. Not only, in Said’s ‘Orientalist’ sense, were we constructed as different and other within the categories of knowledge of the West by those regimes. They had the power to make us see and experience *ourselves* as ‘Other’” (Hall 394). Hall stresses that it is one thing to “position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to that ‘knowledge’, not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, but also by the power of inner compulsion and subjective con-formation to the norm” (Hall 394).

Hence, Hall contends that, from this perspective, it simply must be acknowledged that cultural identity:

...is not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture. It is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside us on which history has made no fundamental mark. It is not once-and-for-all. It is not a fixed origin to which we can make some final and absolute Return. (Hall 395)

The above fragment raises an indispensable question: if “identity does not proceed, in a straight unbroken line, from some fixed origin, how are we to understand its formation?” (Hall 395). In response, Hall offers his model of Caribbean identity. He suggests that we should think of “black Caribbean identities as ‘framed by two axes or vectors, simultaneously operative: the vector of similarity or continuity [the first model of identity]; and the vector of difference and rupture’” (Hall 395). Employing a Bakhtinian metaphor, he contends that these two axes exist in a ‘dialogic relationship’: paradoxically, “what we share is precisely the experience of a profound discontinuity”. To be precise,

...the uprooting of slavery and transportation and the insertion into the plantation economy (as well as the symbolic economy) of the Western world...‘unified’ these peoples across their differences, in the same moment as it cut them off from direct access to their past. (Hall 396)

The task for Hall is, therefore, how to “describe this play of ‘difference’ within identity”. While he acknowledges that a common history has unified us across our differences, this common history “does not constitute a common *origin*, since it was, metaphorically as well as literally, a translation” (Hall 397). Drawing upon the work of Jacques Derrida, Hall contends that such “cultural ‘play’ could not be represented... as a simple binary opposition-‘past/present’, ‘them/us’. Its complexity exceeds this binary structure of representation. At different places, times, in relation to different questions, the boundaries are re-sited”. Hall finds Derrida’s notion of ‘difference’ particularly useful to describe that “special and peculiar supplement which the black and mulatto skin adds to the ‘refinement’ and sophistication” (Hall 397) of European culture. Difference “challenges the fixed binaries which stabilize meaning and representation and show how meaning is never fixed or completed, but keeps on moving on to encompass other, additional or supplementary meanings” (Hall 397). The question is: where “does identity come in to this infinite postponement of meaning?” (Hall 397). Such a view does not contradict the view that meaning is potentially infinite: it “only threatens to do so if we mistake this ‘cut’ of identity – this *positioning*, which makes meaning possible – as a natural and permanent, rather than an arbitrary and contingent ending. Meaning continues to unfold beyond the arbitrary closure which makes it, at any moment, possible. There is always something left over” (Hall 396).

Drawing upon Derrida’s notion of difference, Hall posits that it is possible to “rethink the positioning and repositioning of Caribbean cultural identities in relation to at least three ‘presences’, to borrow Aime Cesaire’s and Leopold Senghor’s metaphor: “*Presence Africaine*, *Presence Europeene*, and *Presence Americaine*” (Hall 398), none of which can ever be fully present (presence is displaced / deferred). Drawing upon both the spatial and temporal metaphors which Derrida employs, Hall is implicitly and

simultaneously comparing Caribbean society to a sign within a wider sign-system, a signifier located along the chain of signification and, by extension, a text which is linked 'intertextually' to other region-texts. Drawing upon the notions of both displacement and deferral, Hall insinuates that the Caribbean is neither an isolated and autonomous place which exists in a social and historical vacuum nor is the past separable from the present.

Hall's notion of diasporic identity is one based upon difference and hybridity. It rejects old "'imperialising' and 'hegemonising' forms of 'ethnicity'" (Hall 401). It is "defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity... *hybridity*" (Hall 402). Hall claims to offer a "different way of thinking about cultural identity" by theorising identity "as constituted, not outside but within representation" and hence of cinema or literature "not as a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists, but as that form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak" (Hall 402). Hall ends by citing the relevance to his model of identity of Benedict Anderson's redefinition of communities as "distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (Hall, 1996: 402).

Individual and Collective Identities

Structure and culture contrast two notions of individual identity. In the first, identity is ascribed, inheriting in the social and family roles the subject occupies; in the second, identity is chosen and responsibilities are freely taken up. Gellner accepts that all social formations afford both identities but with a historical difference. In traditional communities culture reinforces structure, individual decision supports role, whereas 'in modern societies, culture does not so much underline structure: rather, it replaces it' (Gellner 155).

If a man is not firmly set in a social niche, whose relationship as it were endows him with his identity, he is obliged to carry his identity with him, in his whole style of conduct and expression: in other words, his 'culture' becomes his identity. (Gellner 157)

Deprived of structure the subject is driven into culture; denied identity fulfilled in a significant role, he or she demands an individuality which will make up for what has been relinquished. Furthermore, cultural identity is the identity of a group or culture, or of an individual as far as he or she is influenced by his/her belonging to a group or culture. It is similar to and has overlaps with, but is not synonymous with, identity politics. For example, nation is a form of collective identity which becomes possible only in the conditions of *modernity*. Thus, national identity is a product of modernity. There is a widely held belief that nation is a form of ideology, of collective identity, that is, a way of thinking designed to promote the interests of a particular social group. However, Anderson is right to emphasize that nation, like the rest of human culture, is 'imagined' in the sense that it is constructed rather than the result of a natural process:

I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. (Anderson 5-6)

On the other hand, Mouffe states that:

When we accept that every identity is relational and that the condition of existence of every identity is the affirmation of a difference, the determiners of an ‘other’ that is going to play the role of a ‘constitutive outside’, it is possible to understand how antagonisms arise. In the domain of collective identification, where what is in question is the creation of a ‘we’ by the definition of a ‘them’, the possibility always exists that this ‘we/them’ relation will turn into a relation of the friend/ enemy type. (Mouffe 2-3)

What is the case for individual identity must hold equally for collective identity, for those groups whose members identify with a common object and so find identification with each other. All collective identity (clan, nation, region, ethnic group) identifies self by denying the other, demarcates inside from outside, stretches a distance between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The condition for collective identification – ‘my blood, my family, my kin, my clan, my nation, my race’ – is an ever-present and potentially violent expulsion of those who are *not* ‘my blood, my family, my kin, my clan, my nation, my race’. Thus, national identity constitutes itself through resistance to its oppression – the fight for national revival is therefore a defence of something which comes to be only through being experienced as lost or endangered. The existing of one nation presupposes other identical nations, with the consequences that cause Hegel such anxiety and which might be phrased as: ‘if the other is so like me, the other is within’.

It is an effect, first of all, of the process of collective identification with a common object which is accompanied by identification of individuals with each other. And, as a pre-condition for this effect, there is already the process within the individual subject in which an identity, mirrored from the Other is treated as the self. If identity is conferred in and by discourse and since discourse is by nature differential, dispersed and plural, it would follow that, no matter what national identity claims for itself, it can never be more than one among many. Empirically it seems obviously that each of us performs a number of identities. Besides the family, identities extend in overlapping circles into ethnic and sub-cultural identities as well as local and regional ones, and above the national register, continental and potentially international identities. The individual, then, is an effect of multiple identifications. For example, if I was born and brought up in England I may mainly identify myself as English; but if as a child I am taken for some time to Jamaica I will have to live into that identity. Paul Gilroy writes: “I am not against the nation...I am against the rhetoric of cultural insider(ism), because I think it is too readily limited to unacceptable ideas of homogeneous national culture and exclusionary national or ethnic belonging” (Gilroy 72). Thus, if identity is understood as an effect of discourse, national identity in a national culture can never achieve the unified homogeneity it wishes for itself. In this case, we have to admit that there can be no escape from identity; and further that all identity defines itself precisely by establishing an inside

(*in-hereness*) and an outside (*out-hereness*) so that all identity, to a certain degree, practises *insiderism* together with an exclusionary force. Any homogeneity is unsettled rather by a distinction between *centre* and *margins*. In this case, Anthony Smith concludes that:

Of all the collective identities in which human beings share today, national identity is perhaps the most fundamental and inclusive. Not only has *nationalism*, the ideological movement, penetrated every corner of the globe; the world is divided, first and foremost, into 'nation-states' – states claiming to be nations – and national identity everywhere underpins the recurrent drive for popular sovereignty and democracy, as well as the exclusive tyranny that it sometimes breeds. Other types of collective identity – class, gender, race, religion – may overlap or combine with national identity but they rarely succeed in undermining its hold, though they may influence its direction. (Smith 143)

Cultural Alterity

The 'other', seen as a threat, alter-ego and enigma to and of the self has been a major preoccupation of Western thought. In recent times the figure of the other, hitherto silent and effaced, has made claims to speak *back*, disrupting the realm of politics in radical ways: thus women, 'natives', minorities, deviants, subalterns, now claim to speak as others. Both epistemologically and politically, therefore, the other is central to our contemporary concerns. Postcolonial theory has made questions such as the following: what does the 'other' mean to these endeavours? Who is the 'other', historically and symbolically? Do *self* and *other* translate inevitably into 'us' and 'them'? How is the other known: is knowledge of the other (always) a form of colonization, domination, violence, or can it be pursued as disinterested truth?

The definition offered by Orthographic English Dictionary describes alterity as: "The state of being other or different; diversity, 'otherness'". Difference and otherness actually contain a cluster of meanings. This definition emphasizes the conditions or qualities of separateness, dissimilarity and distinction, especially from an expected norm and contains concepts like difference and otherness within itself. At the other pole one could find such terms as *mimesis* or *copy*. Moreover, *cultural alterity* is a pattern of looking at those outside a group, whatever that group might be, as inferior to another group. Groups or societies form many traits and beliefs. Once they do so, there is almost always someone left out, someone who doesn't fit the group's normative expectations. Those who don't fit, who aren't really included, are the Other. That is, cultural alterity is the process by which we define some people as included, others as excluded. It is a term central to postmodern discussions of identity in which the self is given meaning in terms of an 'other'. This other is posed or imagined in terms of difference. Alterity then is a state of, or condition of, otherness. Negative qualities are projected onto these 'others' and the imagined contrast with them strengthen the sense of one's own rightness and confirm one's sense of identity. In other words, *cultural alterity* is never thought of as positive difference, but always as inferiority on a hierarchical axis.

Alterity as a Metaphor of the Screen

Firstly, this phenomenon, in which otherness is mediated, is related to the idea of seeing others through a screen. The three categories include: the other seen through a screen, the other seen as a screen, and the other as a medium for exchange. In the first category, *the screen symbolizes a boundary* which represents a space of exclusion or limitation between the self and the other, or individuals and their unconscious. In the case of the second category *the screen identifies with the others*. The screen thus becomes like a surface for projection. What one perceives are the stereotypes of the others; projection in this case tends to obscure the other's identity with a dynamic relationship between fact and fantasy. The third category, *the other seen as a medium for exchange*, departs from the metaphor of the screen being in this case the place for interaction.

Since Descartes, the relationship between *self* and *other* describes an opposition within the individual's consciousness which leads to questions of skepticism about the other such as whether one can know other minds or how 'I', the subject, can know the other. In this philosophy, the experience and recognition of the other can be explained in terms of the other seen through a screen. The problem begins with knowing oneself and once the skeptic accepts his own existence, the relationship between self and other becomes increasingly complex. When the self refers to the individual, one must wonder to what extent a person can actually know one's own mind. Thus, the screen becomes a boundary or limit between individuals and their ability to know the other, insofar as the self refers to 'I' and everything else is other or 'not-I'. Jacques Lacan's theory of the mirror stage depicts an example of alterity that transforms the *screen* into a surface of reflection.

In Lacanian terms the formation of the subject necessitates a splitting of the self into 'self' and 'other' or *identity* and *difference*. The *mirror stage* stresses a narcissistic relationship of the subject to his image counterpart, the ideal ego. Thus, the identity of the individual is constituted by being borrowed from the Other. In this way, the unconscious provides an example of an-other in the tension between the subject and the ego. The internal struggle for the ego ideal disturbs any simple conception of alterity defined solely by difference or diversity located in interpersonal relationships or the 'I' and everything else, identified as 'not-I'. In other words, the experience of difference follows from the existence of the symbolic order of which any individual identity is an effect, from the discovery that 'every identity is relational' (in Mouffe's phrasing), that there is *alterity* at the nucleus of our sense of being ourselves, that "I is an other" (Lacan 23).

Besides being involved in ideas about individual identity formation, alterity enables the classification of groups of individuals into categories like class, gender, race, sexuality and ethnicity to mark differences and similarities among people. In terms of society, the category of *the other as a screen* provides a useful conception for extending the binary opposition between person-to-person relationships of the self and other to larger social groupings, although projection exists on the individual level too. *The sociological conception of alterity* may often entail a negative connotation embedded in terms like 'cultural alterity', because of practices like stereotyping that allow people to use social markers to construct identity. Consequently, social identification, stereotyping,

or racism form a sort of lens that projects an imagined conception onto the screen of the other. In one view, a sociologist or ethnographer might observe cultural alterity embodying a human tendency to notice sameness and difference, and groups or societies form in ways that organize around principles of inclusion and exclusion.

Inclusion and exclusion arise in the relationship between the colonizers and colonized, for example in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*. He gives an account of the colonial environment inherently engendering inferiority complexes for the colonized because "the black is a black man; that is as the result of a series of aberrations of affect, he is rooted at the core of a universe from which he must be extricated" (Fanon 183). Fanon describes his mission in his book to be "the liberation of the man of colour from himself" because as a result of the prejudice and stereotyping arising from the cultural differences, the excluded seeks and desires to prove his humanity, his sameness, to the included and find solidarity with the white man.

In this case, the other as a screen must emphasize that power disparities can change the other into a blank screen. This blank screen creates a space for the other, the colonized, to function as a surface upon which the subject, the colonizers can project their senses and definitions of the other and against which they can define themselves. In other words, instead of permitting transmission and discourse, the other seen through projection onto a screen enables the proliferation of prejudice, stereotypes and inferiority. The unequal power relationship mitigates similarities between the groups; consequently, the 'blankness' of the screen comes at the expense of the other's identity, on which the normative standards project a new identity and terms for understanding the self. The simple presence of the colonized Other within the textual structure is enough evidence of the ambivalence of the colonial text, an ambivalence that destabilizes its claim for absolute authority or unquestionable authenticity.

Conclusions

This paper explores a theoretical framework of the relationship between hybrid identities and cultural alterity focusing on two directions of thought: one that claims that the reinvented self expresses the simultaneity of cultural identities; and the other one that argues that the existential anxiety is related to the feeling of estrangement from the Other. The concept of hybridity contains *in nuce* the idea of mixture, combination, fusion, *mélange*. The metaphor of hybridity, in which cultures are seen as "floating together", leads to the existence of a 'fluid identity'. On the one hand, hybridity may imply a space between two pure identities; on the other hand, it can be understood as a *sine-qua-non* condition of the human cultures, which do not contain pure identities, as trans-cultural processes are taking place. As a discursive construction, the rhetoric of hybridity analyzes the relationship between cultural hybridity and alterity, dealing with the creation of new transcultural forms, namely the *diasporic hybridities* ('shifting homeland' and 'travelling identities'), from within the 'contact zone', produced by the colonizing process.

In this respect, the paper also focuses on a critique of postcolonial/cultural studies using the matrix of the modern/colonial world, as a response to the Other's dilemma. The idea that the postcolonial culture is a hybrid one derives straight from the notion of de-

territorialization, suggesting that the disappearance of the relationship between culture and place is doubled by the mixture of the uprooted cultural identities. This type of critique is found on the borders, in the overlaps, and the in-between places, between two or more cultures. No cultural identity is produced out of thin air. It is produced out of those historical experiences, those cultural traditions, those lost and marginal languages, those marginalized experiences, those peoples and histories that remain unwritten. Those are the specific roots of identity; identity is not in the past to be found, but in the future to be constructed.

The image of cultural hybridity is a metaphoric substitution, an illusion of presence, a sign of its absence and loss. It is precisely from this edge of meaning and being, from this shifting boundary of otherness within identity, that the concept of hybridity wants to objectify confrontation with *otherness*; in the *colonial psyche* there is an unconscious disavowal of the negating, splitting moment of desire. The place of the Other must not be imagined as a fixed phenomenological point, opposed to the self, that represents a culturally alien consciousness. The Other must be seen as the necessary negation of a primordial/pure identity – cultural or psychic – that introduces the system of differentiation which enables the ‘cultural alterity’ to be signified as a symbolic, historic reality. Thus, if the subject of desire is never simply myself, then the Other is never simply an *It-self*.

This paper tries to show that, as a principle of identification in the relationship between hybridity and cultural alterity, the Other bestows a degree of objectivity; its representation is always ambivalent, disclosing a lack. The metaphoric access to identity is exactly the place of prohibition and repression, more precisely a conflict of authority. Identification, as it is spoken in the desire of the Other, is always a question of interpretation for it is the elusive recognition of myself with a one-self.

Moreover, the paper explores the ambivalent, uncertain questions of the hybrid colonial desire. We can think of a correspondence between the *mise-en-scène* of unconscious fantasy, the racist fear (the language of colonial racism) and the hate that stalk the colonial scene, seen as a depersonalization of the colonial man. It is this flash of ‘recognition’ – in its Hegelian sense with its transcendental spirit – that inflames the colonial relation between. In disavowing the culturally differentiated condition of the colonial world, the colonizer is himself caught in the ambivalence of paranoid identification. The white man does not deny what he fears and desires by projecting it on ‘them’. By following the trajectory of colonial desire in the company of the colonial figure, it becomes possible to cross, even to shift the Manichean boundaries of colonial consciousness. But the strategic return of that difference that informs and deforms the image of identity, in the margin of Otherness, displays identification between hybridity and cultural alterity. The disavowal of the Other always exacerbates the ‘edge’ of identification and reveals that dangerous place where hybridity and cultural alterity are twinned.

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