ARTIGO

Tracing Hybridity in Theory

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In the last decade there is barely a debate on cultural theory or postmodern subjectivity that does not acknowledge the productive side of hybridity and describe identity as being in some form of hybrid state.[1] This is a radical inversion of the historical status that has trailed this concept. For as long as the concepts of purity and exclusivity have been central to a racialised theory of identity, hybridity has, in one way or another, served as a threat to the fullness of selfhood. The hybrid has often been positioned within or beside modern theories of human origin and social development, mostly appearing as the moral marker of either contamination, failure or regression. Yet, one of the 'achievements' of poststructuralist theory was to liberate the subject from notions of fixity and purity in origin. And in a social context where the political structures for mobilizing and integrating emancipatory projects were also fragmenting it was almost a form of succour to remind ourselves of our 'multiple subjectivities'. Can we now have the confidence that hybridity has been moved out from the loaded discourse of 'race', and situated within a more neutral zone of identity?

The contemporary discourse of cultural criticism and critical theory have embraced a number of models for representing the supposed 'newness' of postmodern identity: along with the concept of hybridity there is the cyborgian fantasy of fusion between man and machine, as well as the morphing of one object into another. This incorporation of the concept of hybridity into the mainstream cultural discourse has raised new problems. Hybridity has served as the

[1]In *The Complicities of Culture: Hybridity and 'New Internationalism'*, Cornerhouse Communique, No 4, Manchester, 1994, I explored the incorporation of the term hybridity in art criticism and curatorial practice. As an indication of how similar inroads have been made in literary and cultural theory consider the recent overview by Iain Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture. Identity* , Routledge, London, 1994. For a most comprehensive account of the concept of hybridity within nineteenth century scientific racism and British colonialism and its legacies in contemporary theory see Robert J C Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory*, Routledge, London, 1995.

organizing principle for both international cultural initiatives as well as entered the programmes of local social movements. Artists like Guillermo Gomez-Pena who previously described both his subjectivity and the form of his work as hybrid are now increasingly suspicious of its utility. When Guillermo Gomez-Pena once used hybridity as an 'elastic metaphor' to address the process of contradiction and difference in cultural exchange he did not expect that it would be stretched so far as to justify either the exclusivist territorializing in downtown LA or the expansionist policies of NAFTA.[2]

From art critics in popular art magazines like FRIEZE to influential social theorists like Zygmunt Bauman, the concept of hybridity has been adopted to both demonstrate the principle of aesthetic connection that occurs from kitsch to high culture, and address the construction of identity in a context ontological uncertainty.[3] As hybridity achieves a more popular status it has been called on to perform a bridging function which previous concepts have failed to achieve. Just as the old modernist ideal of cosmopolitanism begins to appear passe, and the idea of a 'new internationalism' is caught on the shabby horns of the New World Order, hybridity is ushered forward as the specific identity, which paradoxically, is universally applicable. Hybridity is the most unlikely contender for this role as 'multi-purpose globalising identity kit'.

Despite it's historical association which bears the dubious traces of colonial and white suprematicist ideologies, most of the contemporary discussions on hybridity are preoccupied by its potential for inclusivity. The dark past of hybridity rarely disturbs the more cheerful populist claims. One of the aims of this essay is to contextualize the various trajectories of thought and traditions in which hybridity has been inserted.

A quick glance at the history of hybridity reveals a bizarre array of ideas. Hybridity has shadowed every organic theory of identity and was deeply inscribed in the nineteenth century

[2]See ref. in Parellograme, Canada

[3]See M. Kwon, "The fullness of empty containers", *FRIEZE*, no 24, October 1995, and Z. Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Polity, Cambridge, 1992.

discourses of scientific racism. Whether it highlighted physiological or cultural difference in identity, it seved primarily as a metaphor for the negative consequences of racial encounters. These metaphors are mercurial. For even when the scientific basis of racism had been discredited, the racist practices were not abandoned but rehoused in the discourse of social types. Indeed the enigmatic 'nature' of the hybrid may still lurk within the contemporary uses of hybridity as a model for cultural identity. Cultural critics like Jean Fisher stress that the concept is too deeply embedded within a discourse that presupposes an evolutionary hierarchy and that it carries the prior purity of biologism.[4] Gayatri Spivak also notes that the preoccupation with hybridity in academic discourse has tended to gloss the persistent social divisions of class and gender.[5]

Despite the pseudo-scientific analogies and negative history that trails in the semantic associations of hybridity the term has gained considerable acceptance within cultural theory. Its current use maybe motivated by the perverse pleasure to take a negative term and transform it into a positive sign, "to wear with pride the name they were given in scorn".[6] Why should the nineteenth century eugenicists be allowed to retain a patent on hybridity? Should we only use words with a pure and inoffensive history, or should we challenge essentialist models of identity by taking on and then subverting their own vocabulary?

The positive feature of hybridity is that it invariably acknowledges that identity is constructed through a negotiation of difference and that the presence of fissures, gaps and contradictions are not necessarily a sign of failure. In its most radical form, the concept also stresses that identity is not the combination, accumulation, fusion or synthesis of various components, but an energy field of different forces. Hybridity is not confined to a cataloguing of difference. It 'unity' is not found in the sum of its parts, but emerges from the process of opening what Homi Bhabha

[4]J. Fisher, "Introduction to special issue: Contamination", *Third Text*, no 32, Autumn 1995.
[5]G. Spivak, "The Narratives of Multiculturalism", ICCCR lecture, University of Manchester, February 1995.
[6]S. Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, Viking, London, p 93.

has called a 'third space' within which other elements encounter and transform each other. Hybridity is both the assemblage that occurs whenever two or more elements meet and the initiatation of a process of change. This perspective is a crucial departure from the functionalist models of cultural exchange. It also breaks with the 'cooking paradigms' of 'mix and match' which recurr in much of the multiculturalist and anti-racist discourses on identity. By charting a path between a number of key theoretical models and perspectives I hope to clarify the historical legacy and sharpen the conceptual apparatus for our understanding of these much maligned monsters of hybridity.

Cultural Hybrids and National Reconciliations

Hybridity evokes narratives of national origin and differentiation. Whenever the process of identity formation is premised on an exclusive boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’, the hybrid, which is born out of the transgression of this boundary, figures as a form of danger, loss and degeneration. If however, the boundary is marked positively - to solicit exchange and inclusion - then the hybrid may yield strength and vitality. Hence the conventional value of the hybrid is always positioned in relation to purity along the axes of inclusion and exclusion In some circumstances, the 'curse' of hybridity is seen as a mixed blessing.

For Octavio Paz, Mexican national identity is undeniably hybrid. With considerable melancholy, however, Paz situates this hybridism in the damaged maternal representations of the 'Malinche complex' and the *chingada* 'the violated woman'. The people of Mexico are all children of a primal violation, that of conquest. Malinche represents the Indian woman who gave herself to the conquistadors. Cortez took her as his mistress, and she by learning his language, became both his lover and his guide. She revealed everything until there was nothing else to take, then she was abandoned.

The ancestral drama for Mexico is thus poised between a traitor and a violator. The father wrapped in the cloak of the conqueror escapes the moral gaze, but the mother, as *chingada,* who is left to give birth to the hybrid nation, is seen as a victim who facilitated violence. The identification of Malinche with the

chingada, reinforces the dominant ideology of rape as it shifts moral attention away from the man and focuses on how she provoked her own violation. The figure of the mother as *chingada* reduces her to abject passivity. She becomes an inert heap of bones, blood and dust. All identity is gutted. The mother is maligned for her submission, her wounds are reminders that the children are the "fruit of violation". Disgust and self-hate compound and provoke further bitterness: "Mexican people have not forgiven *La Malinche* for her betrayal."[7]

Paz sees in this rejection of the violated mother by the unforgiving child both a cry for purity in origin, and a demand for another mother who would rather die than suffer contamination. Rejecting Malinche, the Mexican rejects hybridity in the past and refuses engagement with difference in the present. The rejection of the violated mother serves as a negation of origin by preferring the phantasmagoric exile of solitude and the impossible nostalgia of the uncontaminated womb. With stern invocations, Paz turns back to his people, urging them to face up to the traumas of the 'fallen' mother and to embrace the ambivalence of Malinche.

Racial classifications and the mythology of white supremacy reached their zenith in the justifications of slavery and imperial conquest. Notions of superiority were often premised on alterity, exclusivity and purity. The comforts of ideology, however, failed to constrain a parallel ideology of conquest through sexual penetration. Hence the paradox of conquest: distanciation *and* penetration. In Latin Americ desire and disavowal was most palpably embodied by the presence of hybrids. The unspeakable distaste for - and yet the undeniablity in the presence of - hybrids is reflected by the compulsive classifying of the gradations of blackness. Each word carried a different status and specified the elements in the union.[8]

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[7]O. Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, Allen Lane, London, 1967, p 77.

[8]Parenthetically it can be noted that the origin of the word 'miscegenation', which is a transform of the Greek word *elaleukatio*, referring to the passing from 'black to white', connotes both moral cleansing and self correction. The word first appeared in an anonymous pamphlet in 1864 which set out to satirize Abraham Lincoln by suggesting the salvation of the American people could only be found in the interbreeding between blacks and whites in order to produce a brown-skinned people. D. Aaron, "The 'Inky' Curse: Miscegenation in the White American Literary Imagination", *Social Science Information*, 22, 2 , 1983, pp 169-190.

These names included, mulatto, half-breed, half-caste, mixed breed, quadroon, octoroon, sambo, mango mestizo. Up to one sixty fourth black could be distinguished.[9] In Brazil, despite its cultural hybridity, it took time before the word hybrid was not spoken as a curse. Gilberto Freyre's celebrated account of Brazilian culture, *The Masters and the Slaves* begins with the confession, "Of all the problems confronting Brazil there was none that gave me so much anxiety as that of miscegenation".[10] The rest of the book, as is foretold in an introductory anecdote, seeks to give light to the shadowy status of the hybrid.

> Once upon a time after three straight years of absence from my country, I caught sight of a group of Brazilian seamen-mulattoes and cafusos crossing Brooklyn Bridge. I no longer remember whether they were from Sao Paulo, or from Minas, but I know that they impressed me as being the caricatures of men, and there came to mind a phrase from a book on Brazil by an American traveller: 'the fearful mongrel aspect of the population'. That was the sort of thing to which miscegenation led. I ought to have had some one to tell me what Roquette Pinto had told the Aryanizers of the Brazilian Eugenic Congress in 1929; that these individuals whom I looked upon as representative of Brazil were not simply mulattoes or cafusos but *sickly* ones.[11]

In the early records of the colonial encounters the ambiguity surrounding the hybrid was wrapped in ambivalence. On the one hand, hybridity was blamed for causing bad health. The symptoms included fatigue and indolence. Economic inertia, moral decadence and even syphilis were also effects that hybrids supposedly brought to the New World. But, on the other hand, Freyre reports that the colonizer's and the priest's preferred mistress was the mulatto woman, and he provides countless examples of their desire for the "lascivious hybrid woman". For Freyre, the negative associations given to hybridity were not the result of a deeply internalised ideology of purity but rather, a confusion of subject positions. The

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[9]J. Williamson, *New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the U.S.*, The Free Press, New York, 1980, p xii.

[10]G. Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves*, transl. S. Putnam, Knopf, New York, 1946, p xx. When referring to the general development of such a culture Freyre doesn't speak of a process of hybridity, preferring the term mestizo, and when addressing the specific formations of the Brazilian national identity he proposed the term "Luso-Tropical".

[11]*Ibid.* .In Brazil Aryanization alludes to the absorption of the 'inferior' races by 'superior' ones (ie. the white race) and the gradual shedding of the hybrid characteristics.

disastrous consequences of the first contact, he argued, had been falsely projected onto the offspring. Once the genuine causes of disease and disorder were identified, Freyre believed that the hybrid's advantage would be restored and would establish a firm grounding for a 'racial democracy'. Moral repugnance would dissolve as the society was enlightened by its own potentialities. In this new, celebratory myth, which was defined in opposition to the polarities of race relations in the U.S., hybrids were conceived as lubricants in the clashes of culture, they were the negotiators that would secure a future free of xenophobia.

Freyre had found a resolution to his anxiety over miscegenenation; he would no longer see himself as belonging to a civilization whose origin was "sickly". He became convinced that a hybrid society creates a new social order through the principle of synthesis and combination of differences. Nevertheless, he retained uncritically the hierarchy that privileged the white race through its positive association along the poles of public versus private, culture versus nature, masculine versus feminine throughout his celebration of hybridity.

Freyre's Eurocentrism prohibited him from questioning the paradigms of savagery and primitivism. The conceptual world of the other was rarely entertained; it was simply their virility and domesticity that was embraced, and in this sense his account bears a disturbing resemblance to some integrationist discourses which promote otherness merely in terms of 'black macho' or 'ethnic cuisine'. This is no coincidence, for the model that Freyre is expounding is drawn from European modernism, while his narrative of incorporation is coded in terms of a sexualised arousal and submission. The shock of the Other serves to stimulate seduction and to smarten consumption; via ingestion and absorption. The useful is extracted and the rest is excreted. The modernist in the 'New World' cannabilised the Other, but something troublesome always remained. The hybrid social space that Freyre evokes still privileges the colonizer's aspirations - even as it incorporates the most 'useful' and 'desireable' elements from the 'savage' and the 'slave'. It was also clear, however, that a hybrid society which admits to the vagaries of its origin and does not seek to define itself through 'absolute ideals'

and 'unyielding prejudice', a society that proclaims a loose and open-ended cultural identity, while opening a space for tolerance towards difference, does not necessarily guarantee a universal extension of social justice.

So although Freyre seems to have demonstrated that a hybrid society is not necessarily one in decay or invariably riven by conflict, his anxiety over miscegenation is still evident in his proclamation that the hybrid is not a disavowal of the European identity: "(It) tends to become more and more extra-European though in no sense anti-European".[12] The hybrid is transformed into a sign for the extension of the European spirit. The mixing of blood shifts from being a stain or a stigma, to an aesthetically pleasing and virile combination. Yet the success of the hybrid depends on a particular recipe: potency is secured by the implanting of the white seed in the nurturing indigenous womb. A modernist fantasy of appropriation through insemination is repeated throughout Freyre's narrative of the assimilation between European culture, Indian domesticity and Negro virility.

By privileging the role of mixture, Freyre's account of cultural development clearly distances itself from the nineteenth century theories of natural law, evolution and racial purity that dominated the romantic constructions of nationhood. Hybridity succeeds not in its blind conformity to the European model, but in the application of European systems and ideals in a 'New World'. Progress in the 'New World' is marked by the dialectic of adaptation and transformation. The hybrid's progress is therefore linked to a Eurocentric model of maximization. Mixture is celebrated in Freyre's narrative, but at a secondary level, because it is through mixture that a new order can be realised that will integrate and maximize the Eurocentric 'spirit'. Mixture overtakes purity because it can out perform it. Once again, hybridity is justified, not by "love of humanity" but by the logic of maximization.

The limitations in Freyre's model of hybridity can be further exposed by considering his acknowledgement of being

[12]G. Freyre, *The Gilberto Freyre Reader*, transl. B. Shelby, Knopf, New York, 1974, p 87.

methodologically influenced by Picasso.[13] The ambivalence of hybridity in early modernism is seldom examined in terms other than a celebration of the Western capacity for integrating the 'raw' forms of the other into the dynamic body of metropolitan culture. The difficulties of conceptualising hybridity can be witnessed in an essay by Max Raphael where he sets out to examine the means by which Picasso contributed to the 'break' in the European tradition. Raphael argues that Picasso's affinity for 'Negro Art' represented a potential trespass of what was conceived as the border between reason and non-reason, while also signifying a reversal in the exchange of cultural influence from the periphery to the centre.

Raphael's account of the evolution of artistic practice while ambiguously refering to Levy-Bruhl's controversial anthropological distinction between the mentality of Western and primitive peoples remains convinced that the nationality of the former can assimilate the spirituality of the latter. While not commenting on the commensurability between these different cultural and philosophical forms and despite his attention to the brutalities of colonialism he seemingly endorses the privileges of western rationality. With these limitations in mind I would like to examine the process of incorporating non-western cultural forms into modern art that Raphael offers.

> The integration of Japanese art was the loophole by which traditional artistic rationalism found its way to an artistic sensualism closer to nature. The incorporation of Negroid art, on the other hand, turns against rational and sensory contents in favour of metaphysics and the irrational, and at the same time creates a new, completely Non-European rationalization of form.[14]

Thus he suggests the integration of 'Japanese' art and 'Negroid' art follows the same principle but proceeds through diametrically opposed categories: 'Japanese' art enters through the door of European rationality in order to beckon the West toward its own objectives - that is, to find its way back to nature; 'Negroid' art, by

[13]Z. Nunes, "Anthropology and race in Brazilian modernism", in *Colonial discourse /Postcolonial theory*, ed., F. Barker et al., Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1994, p 120.

[14]M. Raphael, *Proudhon, Marx, Picasso*, trans. I. Marcuse, Lawrence & Wishart, 1980, p 130.

contrast, is projected into the anarchic zone of irrationality. The presence of the two forms is at first perceived as both indigestible and incomprehensible. Yet it is this confrontation with otherness, albeit via latent or marginal concepts, that yields a new form. In both cases the foreign is incorporated in order to confirm or extend the conventional values. Raphael argues that Picasso, in incorporating foreign elements, fails to question the ruptures within metropolitan culture because he leaves the prior distinction between spiritual value and material production untouched. Picasso's example provides a template upon which Raphael can thereby address what he regards as the great contradictions between early modernity and colonialism.

> Psychically emptied and over-rationalized, man discovers in the natives of his colonies a vast traditional domain, and this discovery accelerates his own rapid and continuing flight from Reason. But it also consolidates his humanity in the face of the machine, and activates his hitherto passive mysticism.[15]

Raphael's account of the reconciliation of the modern split between body and soul proceeds *not* through a critique of the existing relationship between material production and spiritual value, in which the modern self is already inscribed, but through an argument about the consumption of the idealized Other. Raphael argues that the Non-European forms were assimilated back into the European tradition, through the mediation of historically prior traditions. The reactivation of latent forms is the lever which allows the entry of the Other, and facilitates a form of moral and normative rejuvination.

> European art assimilated Negroid influences by introducing: (1) the principle of corporeality, and hence, the Greek tendency, during the period of Cubist objects; (2) the mysticism of the soul, and hence, the Gothic, during the period of the cubist field.[16]

This critique of the utilization of non-western elements in Picasso's art gives us an indication of an underlying pathos in the motivation to incorporate foreign elements, and also a surprising insight into the simplicity with which the foreign was understood

[15] *Ibid*., p.131.
[16] *Ibid*., p.142.

within modern culture. I say that this insight is surprising because most critics associate the concept of modernity with an increasing complexity in the structures of everyday life, and assume that the cultural processes that accompany such structures are equally sophisticated. As Don Miller wryly observed: "an idea like 'simple modernity' would be seen as a blatant contradiction."[17] But this is precisely what we do witness in the cultural dynamics that Raphael traces. He argues that the West's success in material production was achieved at the expense of hollowing out Western spiritual values. However, the turn to primitivism in modern art was not a wholesale critique of material production, but simply another extension of the prevailing logic of appropriation and displacement. In primitivism we witness not only the commodification of other spiritual values, but also the domestication of this otherness as it is translated back into the familiar western forms of 'corporeality' and 'mysticism'.

By demonstrating Picasso's paradoxical appeal to Western reason and non-Western spirituality, and in the shift from realism to abstraction, Raphael attempts to probe at the very flaws in modern rationality, as well as to address the unresolved paradoxes between form and content in modernism. His account of Picasso's achievement is significant not just for its evaluations but also for its construction of a model of cross cultural assimilation. According to the dynamics of this model, for the Other to be domesticated it must also be doubled, it must have one face that turns inwards, conveying a sense of belonging, and the other face that turns to the exterior, pointing to the beyond. It is this duality, he suggests, which secures a sense of extension and bridging; thus, for every foreign element to be accepted, there must be both a centrifugal and a centripetal force; a narcissistic sense of inclusion and a transgressive sense of extension. For the non-western to enter the West it must do so in the guise of the cultural hybrid: the non-western-Westerner.[18]

Hybridity in Colonialism

The clash of cultures that colonialism invariably provoked, rather than producing an absolute bifurcation between the coloniser

[17] D. F. Miller, *The Reason of Metaphor*, New Delhi, Sage, 1992, p. 120.

[18] See also John Berger's account of Picasso as the 'vertical invader' in modern art in *Success and Failure of Picasso*, Penguin, London, 1965.

and the colonised, encouraged the formation of new cultural hybrids. Ashis Nandy's account of the levels of consciousness which at first sustained and then, undermined the colonising project stresses that the conventional binarism which represented the colonised as victim and the coloniser as victor, overlooks that both were caught up as players and counter-players in the dominant model of universalism. Shifting his attention away from the obvious sites of conflict and violence, Nandy focuses on the actual interfaces, such as the processes of negotiation between opposing groups, the means of resistance expressed by urban Westernised Indians and the degrees of degradation experienced by the English coloniser. Agency is never the monopoly of one player, he suggests, for both are locked in a dyadic relationship in which the coloniser becomes a self-destructive co-victim.

> And even that White Sahib may turn out to be defined, not by skin color, but by social and political choices. Certainly he turns out to be ... not the conspiratorial dedicated oppressor that he is made out to be, but a self-destructive co-victim with a reified life-style and a parochial culture, caught in the hinges of a history he swears by.[19]

Colonialism produced new losses and gains, allowed new forms of identity to ascend, and debased or crushed others. This trajectory was always, at least, dual. It was one of the peculiar features of English colonialism that the subjects that induced the greatest discomfort and were the victims of the most bitter attacks were the hybrids. The repulsion that was genuinely felt towards the hybrids was, according to Nandy, deeply connected to the repression of the antonyms and oppositional dualisms that jostled for position in the colonizer's sexual identity and political ideology. Perhaps no other figure articulated these contradictions so exquisitley as did Rudyard Kipling. The very man who so persistently criss-crossed the tremulous line between "Westernised Indian" and "Indianised Westerner" was also the one who insisted that 'West' and 'East' could never be reconciled. For Nandy, Kipling displayed the qualities of the hero who "interfaced culture" and kept open the feminine side in masculinity, while also being able to despise the effeminate hybrid who lacked a clear sense of self. Kipling's capacity to project his own

[19]A. Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1983, p xv.

self-hatred is thus taken as an index of the underlying repressions in colonialism.

> Kipling distinguished between the victim who fights well and pays back the tormentor in his own coin and the victim who is passive-aggressive, effeminate and fights back through non-cooperation, shirking, irresponsibility, malingering and refusal to value face-to-face fights. The first was the 'ideal victim' Kipling wished to be, and the second was the victim's life Kipling lived and hated living. If he did not have any compassion for the victims of the world, he did not have any compassion for a part of himself either.[20]

The conflict of interests between the coloniser and the colonised was also a conflict between the parts and processes of identity. It promoted a self-image and form of consciousness that was defined in opposition to the putative characteristics of the "Eastern man" and exaggerated the qualities of hardness, distanciation and responsibility. A self was fashioned that was not only more congruent to the needs of the colonial machine but intolerant of the inherent mixtures in one's self and in others. The acknowledgement of his own androgynous biculturalism was - according to Nandy - Kipling's most disturbing dilemma, and his solution, which accords with the dominant model, was to opt for absolute choice. He should be *either* Western *or* Indian. It was inconceivable to be *both*, for the path of progress was opposed to those meandering oxymorons and perambulating paradoxes.

While a reordering of the coloniser's consciousness and a distanciation from that of the colonised was central to the success of the colonial project, it was also - as Nandy suggests - the cause of its rigidity that ultimately facilitated its own demise. Kipling could never reconcile *both* his Western *and* Indian selves, yet in everyday life such conjunctions were both practical and continuous with the syncretic processes which constructed Indian identity. The relentless quest for purity and the historical burden of superiority never allowed Kipling to grasp the resilient dynamism of hybridity, and so he remained slightly detached from even his most beloved subjects. Crucial to the transformative processes of Indian tradition was what the coloniser dreaded most, a critical engagement with the other.

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[20] *Ibid.*, p 68.

> India has tried to capture the differentia of the West within its own cultural domain, not merely on the basis of a view of the West as politically intrusive or as culturally inferior, but as a subculture meaningful in itself and important, though not all-important, in the Indian context.[21]

Kipling's personal failures are history lessons for Nandy, because each expression of moral repugnance and political outrage was so utterly framed by the Enlightenment ideals of development through determinate sequences. Surveying the culture as if caught in the "backward innocence of childhood", the Indian identity slipped in and out of the determinacy. It was this indeterminateness which Kipling hated, yet it was the key to survival under colonialism and to the creative space that ensured cultural transformation.

For Nandy, all encounters produce change. The perversity of colonialism is thus measured not just in terms of the extreme exploitation of the other, but also in the contortion and constrictions of the self that were necessary to enforce such a relationship. Nandy explains this process of cultural co-optation in two ways. First, he demonstrates the homology between sexual repression and political dominance which led to an internalization of self-images of hardness and detachment as the appropriate "manly" modes of colonial rule. Second, he reveals that the initial identification with the aggressor was not just an attempt to seek salvation by means of mimicry but also a resurrection of latent self-images which could be made compatible with the ideology of colonialism.

A version of Indian hyper-masculinism would thus not only mirror back the ruler's wishes but also serve as "new, nearly exclusive indicator of authentic Indianness".[22] Under colonialism both the ruler and the ruled produced new self-images which were selectively drawn from earlier forms of social consciousness. Colonialism found legitimacy because it elicited a set of codes that were common to both cultures, and because it was thereby able to privilege components that were previously subordinant or recessive in these cultures. The seeds for this foundational colonialism were already contained in the consciousness of both parties, and central to

[21] *Ibid.*, p 76
[22] *Ibid.*, p 7

its legitimacy was the valorization of the pure and the denigration of the hybrid - that is, of sexual and spiritual androgyny.

Nandy's account of the colonial modes of exchange through the psychic mechanisms of projections and introjections and his celebration of the 'superior' resilience of hybridity, leaves one central question unanswered: does the encounter with the Other presuppose a replaying of old identities or the invention of new ones? Nandy systematically elaborates the principles of exchange as a rupture in prevailing cultural codes and priorities, and the establishment of new modes of self-presentation and social management. The rupture is not seen as a total upheaval but as a radical shift of emphasis, which leads to the highlighting of aspects of the self which had been kept dark, and a promotion of previously recessive components of culture.

Although there is no explicit theory of hybridity in Nandy's narrative, this process of rupture and regrounding outlines the dynamism of exchange. Nandy is able to link the denials and repressions in, say, Kipling's consciousness to both an inability to keep in play the contradictory forces and a tendency to create a distorted and untenable self-image. Similarly, he praises the "Indian's" humble capacity to include aspects of the Other without losing his or her original cultural checks and balances. However, in order to consolidate the argument that distanciation inevitably leads to atrophy and identification secures survival, one also needs a closer theory of the dynamics of exchange. Moreover, to understand both the disturbing anxiety generated by cultural hybrids and the productive and enabling force of hybridity there needs to be a closer scrutiny of the creation of differences, precisely when there is a renewed circulation of equivalences, or an exaggerated outburst of hostility towards the 'intimate enemy'. For this theorization of difference we must turn elsewhere, and move on from the history of culture to consider the semiotics of culture.

The semiotics of hybridity

Bakhtin's attention to the mixture of languages within a text, which both ironizes and unmasks authority, demonstrates a new level of linking the concept of hybridity to the politics of

representation.[23] The language of hybridity becomes a means for critique and resistance to the monological language of authority. The hybrid text always undoes the priorites and disrupts the singular order by which the dominant code categorises the other. In Bakhtin's theory the "doubleness" of the hybrid voices is composed not through the integration of differences but via a series of dialogical counterpoints, each set against the other, allowing the language to be both the same and different. This clearly constitutes a turning point in the debates on hybridity. This turning point is most evident in the current appeal of Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia and the carnivalesque. However, while there has been a greater appreciation of the subversive potential of language, the attention to difference within literary and critical theory has been mostly confined to a representation of its products rather an engagement with its processes. To overcome this limitation it would be useful to turn to the work of Yuri Lotman, a Russian semiotician who both drew on Bakhtin's theory of hybridity and extended it into the semiotics of culture. If the concept of hybridity is to go beyond a mere celebration or denigration of difference, then Lotman's theory which outlines the dynamism of difference within culture, might provide a valuable framework.

Lotman's approach to the semiotics of culture goes beyond the conventional concerns with the uses of signs for the communication of content.Inhis work culture is thus defined as a system that mediates the individual's relationship to his or her context, the mechanism for processing and organising the surrounding signs. The way we deal with inputs, how decisions are made, priorities established, behaviour regulated, models envisaged and questions posed in the "communicating dialogue" with the outside world, is all expressive of a particular sense of culture. This dialogue always comprises of relatively individualised languages which are in a state of interdependence and are transformed by their specific historical conditions. Lotman stresses this interdependence and avoids any movement towards analytical abstraction, for culture is never a mere

[23]Robert J C Young, has drawn attention to the concept of hybridity in Bakhtin's theory of language and its broader implications for cultural theory. See *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory*, Routledge, London, 1995, pp 20-22.

summation of separate and discrete languages. Therefore the formation of a cultural system cannot be seen to resemble the overlapping leaves of an "onion" . In Lotman's theory the form of culture is defined via references to motion rather than by comparison to a static or bounded object. Hence it is seen to be more like a river with a number of currents moving at different rates and intensities. The aim is to see how culture operates as a whole, in a state of constant "creolization", or what he calls the "semiotic physiology" as opposed to the "atomistic approach".

The name Lotman gives for this dynamic process of influence, transformation and co-existance within the space of culture is the semiosphere.[24] The semiosphere is the totality of semiotic acts, from squeaks to sonatas, from blips on the radar to burps at the dinner table. It also includes all acts past and present, possessing a "memory which transforms the history of the system into its actually functioning mechanism, this includes the mass of texts ever created and ... the programme for generating future texts."[25] While the value and position of elements within a language shift and change, and the set of languages within a cultural field intersect, fragment, diversify or reallign, the whole of the semiotic space remains constant. Thus the semiosphere refers to the totality of the cultural system, and also the condition for the development of culture.

To illustrate the heterogeneity of elements and the diversity of functions which are contained within the semiosphere Lotman uses the example of the museum as a model for the possibility of representing and containing difference within a single system. The museum, he argues, is a single space containing exhibits from different periods; each exhibit bears inscriptions in languages which may or may not be decipherable, there are instructions, explanations, guides, rules and plans which, to some degree, regulate the responses of visitors and staff. Within this single space, Lotman stresses, we have to remember that all the elements are dynamic, not static, and that the correlations between terms are constantly changing. In a

[24]J M Lotman, *The Universe of the Mind*, trans. A. Shukman, Tauris, London, 1991, p 123.
[25]J.M. Lotman & B.A. Uspenskij, *The Semiotics of Russian Culture*, trans. A. Shukman, Michigan Slavic Contribution, No. 11, Ann Arbor, 1984, pxii.

context where the construction of the museum as an encyclopaedic repository of culture's diversity is deeply contested, this may seem as a flawed example. Nevertheless, it remains a paradigmatic example of staging difference within contemporary culture.

Within the model of the museum we can at least see how Lotman's conception of the semiosphere recognizes oppositions and tension, for it does not presuppose that this binarism either leads to a single point of antagonism, or that positions are mutually exclusive and immutable. His representation of the system of communication recognises that binarisms constantly undo their own fixity. It describes a system in which there is a constant conflict between the resolute and the opaque codes, the compatible and the contradictory practices. The relationship between centre and periphery in the semiosphere is not explained by either the functionalist paradigm of mechanical interaction, or the dialectical model for the overcoming of antagonisms but, rather, by an attention to the dynamics of contestation over the *fit* between the language of the code and the language of practice. At one stage he tries to evoke the incalculable flux of intellectual energy within the semiosphere by saying that it "seethes like the sun".[26] However, with this metaphor, which suggests both organic thrust and chaotic dispersal, there is the sense that the principle of power cannot be contained neatly in the acts of cultural exchange. In some sense this energy of transmission that he refers to being central to the semiosphere bypasses the political questions of power and overides the coordinates of morality.

The structure of the semiosphere can be crowded and chaotic, possessing languages with different levels and forms of representation. Lotman consciously idealizes the opposition between centre and periphery in terms of codification and indeterminacy in order to articulate the constant tension in the definition of norms, customs and laws which are generated to legitimize the extension of one language over the whole semiosphere. He is astutely conscious of the counter-productive consequences of a hegemonic language. In the semiosphere, the expansion of one language is only achieved by its rigidification and its severance from the milieu of dynamic

[26]Lotman, The Universe of the Mind, *op cit*., p 150

interaction. To expand in a unified manner is to become more and more prone to disintegration. For the periphery never passively accepts conversion and it is this tension between the code of the centre and its (in)ability to reflect the practices in the periphery that produce a dissenting language. Lotman describes the contradictions that await 'the proselytizing mission' of the centre thus:

> If in the centre of the semiosphere the description of texts generates the norms, then on the periphery the norms, actively invading 'incorrect' practice, will generate 'correct' texts in accord with them. Secondly, whole layers of cultural phenomena, which from the point of view of the given metalanguage are marginal, will have no relation to the idealized portrait of that culture.[27]

This uneven terrain of cultural production and the stochastic distribution or multi-vectorial transmission of culture is also stressed by Michel Serres. In his complex analyses of cultural dynamics he persistently questions the transparency of the laws of determinism and challenges the conventional passage from the local to the global.[28] The productive tension between local and global, noise and dialect that Serres notes, is similar to Lotman's tracking of the flux of energy that follows every criss-crossing of a boundary. For Lotman, the semiosphere is in a constant state of hybridity. It always oscillates between identity and alterity, and this tension is most evident at its boundaries.

> Paradoxically, the internal space of a semiosphere is at the same time unequal yet unified, asymmetrical yet uniform. Composed as it is of conflicting structures, it nonetheless is also marked by individuation. Its self-description implies a first person pronoun. One of the primary mechanisms of semiotic individuation is the boundary, and the boundary can be defined as the outer limit of a first-person form. This space is 'ours', 'my own', it is 'cultured', 'safe', 'harmoniously organized', and so on. By contrast 'their space' is 'other', 'hostile', 'dangerous', 'chaotic'.
>
> Every culture begins by dividing the world into 'its own' internal space and 'their' external space. How this binary division is interpreted depends on the typology of the culture.[29]

An archetypical example of this type of differentiation between US and THEM, a relationship of non-relationship whereby

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[27]Ibid.,
[28]M. Serres, *Hermes*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1982, p 80.
[29]Lotman, The Universe of the Mind, *op cit*., p 131.

the exterior Other is defined by the logic of the inversion is the designation of the Other as Barbarian. The crucial marker is, in this instance, language: a Barbarian is simply the person who does not speak Greek. However, the Other that is within the semiosphere is not perceived by such an *a priori* categorization, but is identified through the processes of translation. The construction of the exterior Other by the logic of inversion is designed to preclude dialogue, whereas the presence of an other who speaks different languages within the semiosphere, interacts through translation, and thus facilitates both dialogue and transformation. Because the different languages within the semiosphere do not have mutual semantic correspondences translation presupposes asymmetry. Once the other's utterances stop soundng like muttering "bar bar bar", and he or she is demed to speak Greek properly, he or she is no longer just a Barbarian. But this difference, as Lotman emphasise, has to be perceived as both necessary and desirable, for the precondition for dialogue is the mutual attraction of the participants. Lotman outlines the mechanisms by which dialogue occurs in the context of difference - that is, how information is generated from the tension between a language and its contact with a foreign text - and he describes this process of interaction in five stages. This enables us, I suggest, reflect on Raphael's explanation of Picasso's success and Nandy's account of exchange within colonialism:

First, a text arrives from the outside, it appears in its original form, in its own language, its strangeness is intact; it is not considered a threat or a problem because it is presumed to be superior and therefore will offer a positive contribution.

Second, a transformation at both ends begins to occur - that is, the imported text and the receiving culture begin to restructure each other. The foreign text is idealized because it offers the local culture the opportunity to break with the past. Here the foreign text is imbued with salvific qualities. However, there also emerges a counter-tendency whereby the foreign text is linked to a submerged element in the receiving culture; the foreign thus activates a dormant component, and is therefore interpreted as an organic continuation or a rehabilitation of the familiar culture.

Third, there emerges the tendency to deprecate the source of origin from which the text came and emphasise that the true potential of the text is only realized by being integrated into the receiving culture. Reception has not only led to transformation but is also a form of transcendance. Before, it was debased and distorted; now it has the grace of truth and universality.
Fourth, after the imported text has been fully assimilated, its distinctive presence has been dissolved, and has led to the production of a new model. Now that the receiver has internalised the text and restructured its own axioms and values, the local becomes producer of the new and original texts.
Fifth, the receiver is now a transmitter - or in Lotman's words it, "issues forth a flood of texts directed to other, peripheral areas of the semiosphere."[30]

Lotman was conscious that this dialogue - or what he calls this process of "infection" - could only be realized under favourable historical, social and psychological conditions. But Serres adds another dimension which locates the interruptive moment and the potential for innovation not singularly in the dialogue between the interlocutors, but in what he sees as the alliance against the disruptive third man:

> Such communication (dialogue) is a sort of game played by two interlocutors considered as united against the phenomena of interference and confusion, or against individuals with some stake in interrupting communication. These interlocutors are in no way opposed, as in the traditional conception of the dialectic game; on the contrary, they are on the same side, tied together by a mutual interest: they battle against noise. ... They exchange roles sufficiently often for us to view them as struggling against a common enemy. To hold a dialogue is to suppose a third man and to seek to exclude him: a successful communication is the exclusion of the third man. The most profound dialectical problem is not the Other who is only a variety - or a variation - of the same, it is the problem of the third man[31]

Where Lotman defines the semiosphere as the resultant and the condition of possibility of the system of communication, Serres invokes the third man - or what he also referred to as the parasite. Lotman's theory acknowledges the fluidity and the perpetuity of

[30]*Ibid.*, p 147.
[31]Serres, *op. cit.*, pp 66-67.

cultural interaction. Serres highlights the previously unacknowledged vectorial forces of a third element which emerges whenever two subjects enter into a dialogical relationship. Both approaches break with the functionalist models for understanding the incorporation of difference in terms of either assimilation or amalgamation. Both theorists are intensely conscious of the role of the hybrid and creolized, and draw attention to the splitting, the interference in the dissemination of languages, leading us towards a re-evaluation of the position, role and function of the stranger, yet both theories say little about the precondition of desire in mutual attraction or the disposition to delegate the stranger to the position of the third man. Are these structural questions simply left as the invisible bias of history?

The problem with the semiosphere is that it does not directly address the politics in the distinctions between language and silence, between coherence and babble, between comprehension and confusion, the determining patterns of selection that influence which languages will be learnt, and what thresholds between the axioms of transparency and opaqueness in language will be sustained in order to stimulate particular forms of knowledge and to permit the emergence of particular claims. In other words, it does not address the politics by which the margin is hierarchised, appropriated, tokenised or fetishised in order to serve the interests and maintain the order constructed by the centre. For all his attention to the fluid dynamics of the semiosphere, Lotman appears to have overlooked the specific forces of access and exclusion. The levels of travelling and the process of transmission discount any degree of loss or mutation in the course of the journey. Meaning begins only once the text enters the space of the semiosphere, but what traces are there of the meanings, prior to this encounter? The arrival of a foreign text is never a perfect isomorph of another culture, it, too, is formed by the travails of travelling.

From this perspective it appears that the primary tendency within the semiosphere is toward the acculturation of the foreign text and subtle modification of the dominant language. However, in order to witness the innovative potential of the foreign text, or the restructuring of the dominant language according to the laws of the

Other, we will have to measure the resilience of the foreign code and examine the impact resulting from the insertion of the foreign text. If the interruptive force of hybridity is ultimately smoothed over, as it is incorporated into the semiosphere, then we must question whether this theory of dynamic transformation is sufficiently attentive to either concept of difference or the contemporary crisis within culture.

Hybridity in Postcolonial theory

The most vigorous debates on the dynamics of difference in contemporary culture have occured within the field of postcolonial theory. Given the extremeties of social and psychic upheaval generated by the colonial encounters it is no coincidence that the most radical critics of modern transformation have come from places that have experienced these global changes most brutally. After Fanon's detailed and passionate argument that the violence of colonialism has to be measured according to the West's philosophical consciousness of right as much as its military display of might, and with Ngugi wa Thiongo's clear awareness of the ongoing processes that reshape cultural priorities, redirect political directions and rewrite historical scripts in ways that split internal mechanisms of social mechanisms and bind them to neo-colonial structures, it is then inevitable to overlook the dynamics of hybridity in terms of the colonizing of the mind and the destruction of traditional social forms.

In the context of rupture and violation, communication and identity is always problematical. For as Stuart Hall argues, the emergence of 'other histories' in contemporary discourse is synchronous with the radicalization of the notions of identity, history and language. If the experience of displacement has become the paradoxical starting point for understanding the parameters of belonging in the modern world, then this would entail a challenge to the conceptual framework for understanding identity and culture. On the one hand, there is still the Romantic claim that identity can retain the essential distinctiveness of a culture. On the other, the process of constructing identity through the mixing and engaging with the Other has been given, as we have seen, a far more critical perspective. Recent writings within postcolonial theory routinely cite

the work of Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak as authorising hybrid identities. At the broadest level of conceptual debate there seems to be a consensus over the utility of hybridity as an antidote to essentialist subjectivity. However, Spivak sharply dissents from both Bhabha's and Hall's suggestion that hybridity has purchase in both the Third world postcolonial arena and within the diasporic condition of minorities in the First world.

According to Stuart Hall, cultural identity is always hybrid, but he also insists that the precise form of this hybridity will be determined by specific historical formations and cultural repertoires of enunciation.[32] Homi Bhabha notes the rising influence of once excluded voices now challenging the boundaries of what is seen as a Eurocentric project. The affinity of these interruptive voices, Bhabha suggests, offer the basis for rethinking the process of change and the subjects of modernity.

> For the demography of the new internationalism is the history of postcolonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora, the major social displacements of peasant and aboriginal communities, the poetics of exile and the grim prose of political and economic refugees.[33]

Hybridity may be a condition that is common to all who have sharp memories of deprivation but - as Bhabha also reminds us - it seems an insufficient basis to consolidate new forms of collectivity that can overcome the embeddedness of prior antagonisms. Nevertheless, Bhabha's work has focussed on the psychic processes of identification and the cultural practices of performance to highlight the hybridization that is intrinsic to all forms of radical transformation and traditional renewal. Gayatri Spivak is not so quick to embrace such a demography of postcolonials she draws a sharp distinction between the diasporic communities in the First world and the subaltern in the Third world. The subaltern and the diasporic, are in her view incommensurable worlds and projecting the concept of hybridity into the former is not only a misreading but also akin to providing an alibi for global exploitation. By charting

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[32]S. Hall, *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. by D. Morley & Kuan-Hsing Chen, Routledge, London, 1996, p 502.
[33]H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London, 1995, p 5.

how hybridity is variously defined by Hall, Bhabha and Spivak we can break with the naive assumption that hybridity is itself a stable concept or that one perspective is interchangeable with another.

In Stuart Hall's writing the term hybridity is integral to the Bakhtinian-Gramscian perspective that he brings to bear on his representations of social transformation. Nowhere in his work is there a theoretical model which could be transferred to particular sites of struggle and used to 'read off' examples of hybridity. Hall's understanding of the process of transformation is never constructed in terms of either an absolutist oppositionality - whereby one position demolishes its antagonist - or a neat succession with each stage being a clean brake from the one before. Transformation is seen as occuring in a more 'generative way': as ideas, worldviews and material forces interact with each other, they undergo a process of being internally reworked until the old ones are displaced.

From this perspective, hybridity can be seen as operating on two levels: it refers to the constant process of differentiation and exchange between the center and the periphery and between different peripheries, as well as serving as the metaphor for the form of identity that is being produced from these conjunctions. Hall's representation of hybrid identities as always incomplete does not imply that they aspire to a sense of wholeness and that they invariably fall short of becoming a finished product, but, rather, that their energy for being is directed by the flows of an ongoing process. This anti-essentialist perspective on identity has had significant impact on the debates over the 'politics of representation' and has been utilised by Hall like a spiralling coil to turn the concept of ethnicity out of its anti-racist paradigm, where it connotes the immutable difference of minority experience, and into a term which addresses the historical positions, cultural conditions and political conjunctures through which all identity is constructed. So ethnicity becomes a positive concept for the "recognition that we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture ... We are all, in a sense, *ethnically* located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of

who we are."[34] By initiating such a contestation over the boundaries of ethnicity Hall opens up a mode for understanding identity which is paradoxically both inclusive and specific.

With the revelation of the multiple others in the self - or rather the understanding that the history of the self "as composed always across the silence of the other"[35] - and when language is framed by a broader politics of articulation, embedded, that is, within "an infinite semiosis of meaning"[36], then, this opens the space for the process of re-identification and re-territorialization of experiences previously deemed 'too marginal' to be worthy of representation. Hall describes this re-articulation of the symbolic order through the Gramscian theory of hegemony and counter-politics. The margin challenges the centre via a three pronged strategy: first, through an opposition to the given order; second, via recovery of broken histories and the invention of appropriate narrative forms; and third, through the definition of a position and a language from which speech will continue.

> You could not discover, or try to discuss, the Black movements, civil rights movements, the movements of Black cultural politics in the modern world, without that notion of the re-discovery of where people came from, the return to some kind of roots, the speaking of a past which previously had no language. The attempt to snatch from the hidden histories another place to stand in, another place to speak from. ... Ethnicity is the necessary place or space from which people speak.[37]

Hall's perspective presupposes that translation across cultural difference is always possible. But, how do we map a culture whose own references do not correspond to the coordinates of another culture? How do we represent a culture whose historical memory and conceptual apparatus has been so damaged by the colonial encounter that the very possibility of exchange or dialogue seems no longer to exist? These questions are central to Gayatri Spivak's essay, "Can the subaltern speak?". With characteristic bluntness, Spivak has

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[34]S. Hall, "New Ethnicities", *Black Film, British Cinema*, ed, by K. Mercer, ICA Documents 7, London, 1989.
[35]S. Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities", *Culture, Globalization and The World-System*, ed. A. King, MacMillan, London, 1991, p49
[36]Ibid., p 51
[37]Ibid., p 35

answered her own question in the negative: she has stated that the subaltern cannot speak. Between posing the question and the negative response, lie profound implications about the languages of resistance, the structures of oppression and the role of the intellectual. Spivak argues that there are two sides to the meaning of representation, the political and the rhetorical which are articulated by Marx with separate terms, like proxy and portrayal. This observation serves as both a rebuke against the tendency for conflation by Western intellectuals, and a corrective to any suggestion that there can be a representation of the real subaltern's consciousness. This is because any representation of authentic condition is always premised on "contestatory replacement as well as an appropriation (a supplement) of something that is artificial to begin with - 'economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life'".[38]

Who knows how to best manage the Other? Spivak again casts a suspicious glance toward the possibly benign identification with the subaltern, the well meaning gesture of solidarity with a constituency that the First World intellectuals neither appreciate nor could find the language to address. Against all those facile claims of unity, she reminds us that subalternity is not a condition to be desired. Taking the rural and landless poor of India as her example, Spivak points out that the question of understanding is not confined to the linguistic problem of translation, for how would you translate a culture whose "responsibility based ethical systems have been for centuries completely battered and compromised"[39] into the other culture's notion of democratic rights and civil society? The incommensurability between these two orders is such that the gaps and silence would be more significant than any utterances. There is no clear process by which the realities and experiences of the Indian subaltern can be translated into western categories. Spivak insists that in this instance there is no prior space that can facilitate a dialogue between the West and its Other.

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[38]G.C. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", in P. Williams & L. Chrisman, *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, Harvester, London, 1993, p 71.

[39]G.C. Spivak, "Narratives of Multiculturalism", Lecture at Manchester University, January 1995.

The moment the subaltern has stepped into the arena of representation and negotiation, this is the first mark of a movement away from the position of the subaltern. The ability to 'speak up' to the hegemonic forces is a step towards becoming an organic intellectual. However, to become such a representative is already a movement away from the condition that is being represented. The subaltern condition cannot even bear the privilege of its own 'organic intellectuals'. Spivak repeatedly warns against the presumption that subaltern experiences are texts that are available for translation. This prognosis is aimed particularly at radical historians:

> When we come to the concommitant question of the consciousness of the subaltern, the notion of what the work *cannot* say becomes important. In the semiosis of the social text, elaborations of insurgency stand in the place of 'the utterance'. The sender - 'the peasant' - is marked only as a pointer to an irretrievable consciousness. As for the receivers, we must ask who is the 'real receiver' of an 'insurgency'? The historian, transforming 'insurgency' into 'text for knowledge' is only one 'receiver' of any collectively intended social act. With no possibility of nostalgia for that lost origin, the historian must suspend (as far as possible) the clamor of his or her consciousness, (or consciousness effect, as operated by disciplinary training), so that the elaboration of the insurgency, packaged with an insurgent consciousness, does not freeze into an 'object of identification', or worse yet, a model for imitation. 'The subject' implied by the texts of insurgency can only serve as counterpossibility for the narrative sanction granted to the colonial subject in the dominant groups. The postcolonial intellectuals learn that their privilege is their loss. In this they are a paradigm of the intellectuals.[40]

Spivak's reminder for the need of added reflexivity over the precise status of who is speaking in place of the subaltern, and who would be able to listen to the subaltern, is a precaution against both false delegation and idle identifications. For as she reminds us, to be in the position to speak for the subaltern, is both impossible and unenviable. The poverty and brutalised conditions of the subaltern imply that the very step towards representation involves, at first, a move *out* of its own context. Alienation is the price of every representation. This is the extreme edge of Benjamin's observation that no translation can find exact correspondences between different languages. Thus we could say that unlike Hall's attention to the 'politics of representation', Spivak is more concerned with the

[40]Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak", *op. cit.*, p 82.

'violence of silence'. In this way Spivak, unlike Hall, seems to limit the concept of hybridity as a metaphor for cultural identity.

In Homi Bhabha's writing the concept of hybridity is initially used to expose the conflicts in colonial discourse, then extended to address both the heterogeneous array of signs in modern life and the various ways of living with difference. Hybridity becomes an interpretative mode for dealing with what Bhabha calls the juxtapositions of space, and the combination of 'time lag' out of which a sense of being is constructed that constantly oscillates between the axioms of foreign and familiar. Bhabha suggests that, in order to apprehend the contemporary structures of agency we need to shift our attention away from the concrete production of discrete objects and consider, rather, the restless process of identification. Bhabha places great stress on the 'fact' that identity is never fixed once and for all, it never coheres into an absolute form. For instance, he describes minority discourse as emerging from the "in between of image and sign, the accumulative and the adjunct, presence and proxy".[41] However, the refusal to accept the primacy of an originary essence, or the inevitability of an ultimate destiny for identity, is not an invitation to celebrate the liberation from substantive strictures. The theoretical qualification on the processes of identity formation in no way imply that identity is constructed out of a political and cultural vacuum. To elaborate the elasticity in the trajectory of identity is not a vindication of the claims that the horizons are boundless, access is free and that the past is without weight or shape. According to Bhabha, attention to the process of identification requires a finer recognition of the strategy of negotiation. Identity always presupposes a sense of location and a relationship with others. However, this attention to place does not presuppose closure. For the representation of identity most often occurs precisely at the point when there has been a displacement.[42]

The stress that Bhabha gives to the belatedness in the representation of identity is also connected to a deeper problematic of the partiality of representation in general. The status of

[41]H. Bhabha, ed. *Nation and Narration*, Routledge, London, 1990, p 307.
[42]H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London, 1994, p 185.

representation is defined more by its limitations and distortions than by its ability to capture an 'elusive' spirit or hold the totality of presence. Therefore any theory of agency must also include the process of 'bricolage'. Identity is always conceived in the 'twixt of displacement and re-invention'. By stepping between Benjamin and Bhabha, we could say that representations of identity are at best a 'rear-view' of a part of the past that is pushing us forward into the future. For Bhabha, Jameson's attention to pastiche, Said's appreciation of the contrapuntal, Deleuze and Guattari's tracking of nomadology are parallel metaphors for naming the forms of identity which emerge in a context of difference and displacement:

> The process of reinscription and negotiation - the insertion or intervention of something that takes on new meaning - happens in the temporal break in-between the sign, deprived of subjectivity, in the realm of the intersubjective. Through this time-lag - the temporal break in representation - emerges the process of agency both as a historical development and as the narrative agency of historical discourse. ... It is in the contingent tension that results, that sign and symbol overlap and are indeterminately articulated through the 'temporal break'. Where the sign deprived of the subject - intersubjectivity - returns as subjectivity directed towards the rediscovery of truth, then a (re)ordering of symbols becomes possible in the sphere of the social. When the sign ceases the synchronous flow of the symbol, it also seizes the power to elaborate - through the time-lag - new and hybrid agencies and articulations.[43]

Bhabha clearly differentiates his use of the term hybrid from earlier evocations which defined it as the diabolical stain or the harmonic transcendence between different races. Bhabha has divorced the term hybridity from the context of miscegenation, by placing it, at once in both the semiotic field of discursive reconfiguration, and in the socio-political domain of de-territorialised subjectivity. The exilic drives that underline our understanding of language and identity in modernity are thus made available to highlight the complex structures of agency.[44] The misfit between the formal structures that confer identity in fixed terms like nation, class, gender, race and more fluid practices by which identity moves across certain positions and manoeuvres around given borders is not taken

[43]*Ibid*., p 191.

[44]In an earlier article I have examined in greater detail Bhabha's utilization of psychoanalytic and literary theory, see my "Reading DissemiNation", *Millenium, Journal of International Studies*, Winter 1991, Vol 20, No 3.

as an index of modern freedom but rather highlighted in order to draw attention to the complex dynamics of agency.

Referring to the process of linguistic hybridization in the re-naming that Guillermo Gomez-Pena stages in his performances and texts, Bhabha argues that their potency is not based on their capacity to hold together all the earlier parts or fuse together all the divergent sources of identity, but is found in the way they hold differences together. Like Bakhtin, he notes the sense of separateness and unity in a single semantic field. Hybrid identity is thus not formed in an acretic way whereby the essence of one identity is combined with another and hybridity is simply a process of accumulation. "Hybrid hyphenations emphasise the incommensurable elements - the stubborn chunks - as the basis of cultural identifications."[45] The hybrid is formed out of the dual process of displacement and correspondence in the act of translation. As every translator is painfully aware, meaning seldom moves across borders with pristine integrity. Every translation requires a degree of improvisation. The hybrid, therefore, is not formed out of an excavation and transferral of foreigness into the familiar, but out of this awareness of the untranslatable bits that linger on *in* translation. In this respect Bhabha would be critical of Raphaels model of appropriation.

In many ways Bhabha's strategy for understanding the formation of culture and identity by focusing on the interstitial and liminal moments of articulation and the proposal of terms like hybridity are both timely and effective counters to the essentialist views and organic models which are still common within the social sciences. Certain projects which are defined under the concept of multiculturalism uphold the hegemonic view that new cultures simply emerge from the process of accretion and synthesis. These arguments at best confuse the constituency of cultural difference by quasi-demographic pluralism and at worst, collapse the status of minority culture to a commodity that the dominant culture can safely consume. Bhabha's strategy is not a redemptive one. His strongest work is neither a chronicle of the strategies of political resistance; rather, it focuses on the more general processes through which the

[45]H. Bhabha, The Location of Culture, *op. cit.*, p 219.

tactics of survival and continuity are articulated. Hence his theorising of hybridity is distinct from Freyre's theory of amalgamation which attempts to re-evaluate the historical legacy and lend prestige to the contemporary status of cultural hybrids.

Bhabha's attention to hybridity must also be distinguished from Nandy's theory of co-optation. Bhabha does not confine transformation to the alteration in the position of discrete values and project the encounter as a synthesis of these differences. Instead, by grafting the Bakhtinian notion of the subversive and dialogical force of hybridity onto the ambivalence in the colonial encounter, Bhabhas gives a new twist to the meaning of hybridity. Hybridity is both the process by which the discourse of colonial authority attempts to translate the identity of the Other within a singular category, but then fails and produces something else. The interaction between the two cultures proceeds with the illusion of transferable forms and transparent knowledge, but leads increasingly into resistant, opaque and dissonant exchanges. It is in this tension that a 'third space' emerges which can effect forms of political change that go beyond antagonistic binarisms between the rulers and the ruled. The case of hybridity is pressed because the process of translation is, in his view, one of the most compelling tasks for the cultural critic in the modern world. Yet - to paraphrase Spivak in her corrective notes to other prominent radical theorists - this evocation of hybridity is "so macrological that it cannot account for the micrological texture of power"[46]. Indeed, if we are all hybridised subjects, but our encounters with otherness and our flexing of translation are not equal, then we may well need to return to a theory of ideology to demonstrate how the gaps and slants of representation have various effects on the subject.

[46]G. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", *op. cit.*, p 74.