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## INTRODUCTION

### RETHINKING POST-COLONIALISM AND HYBRIDITY

How does one conceptualise impure, hybrid,  
incommensurable modes of thinking and being,  
without filtering them of their messiness?

Akil Gupta (1998: 6)

The cover of this volume suggests several aspects and qualities related to the concept of hybridity. It indicates difference, de-hierarchization, and the spatial arrangements refer to locality. The globe-shaped field suggests open horizons and motion, temporality and – maybe – a *beyond*. Nicolás García Urriburu, the artist, working in hybrid contexts, has bridged cultural differences and created new contact zones with his exhibitions around the world.

Hybridity, acknowledged as one to the key terms in postcolonial theory, usually refers to “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zones produced by colonization” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 1998: 20). For theorists such as Homi Bhabha, cultural hybridity posits a viable alternative to the ‘exotism of multiculturalism’, and opens the way towards ‘conceptualizing a [genuinely] international culture’. The term itself, however, remains disputed. Robert Young has pointed out the hybridist racist legacy, while Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has warned against the kind of ‘hybridist triumphalism’ that celebrates catch-all concepts of cultural difference without engaging itself sufficiently with special cultural differences. She is critical of utopian visions of global transcultural communities that remain oblivious to the obvious fact that enduring racial prejudices, cultural biases and social hierarchies continue to persist throughout much of the contemporary world, and have yet to be overcome. In addition to these opposing, or eventually complementary, approaches, Alfonso de Toro advocates studying different fields or levels of hybridity. These, in short, are the points of departure.

The essays in this book were written for the international conference *New Hybridities*, held in summer 2004 in a South German monastery, Kloster Seeon, organized by Frank Heidemann, director of the *Graduiertenkolleg* ‘Postcolonial Studies’ at the University of Munich in collaboration with Alfonso de Toro, director of the Research Centre of Ibero-American Studies at the University of Leipzig. Four fields of inquiry were posed at the outset. What are the potential implications and pitfalls of the concept of hybridity? How have the evolving discourses of hybridity that initially emerged out of decolonisation subsequently been transformed by globalisation? What are the meanings of hybridity in different social, cultural, political, economic, historical, literary and linguistic contexts? What tensions have emerged between discourses of hybridity in the different academic disciplines, especially in contemporary postcolonial studies?

The thirteen papers in this volume take up these questions, focusing on hybridities in new postcolonial contexts or in newly formed social arenas. They emphasize political dimensions of cultural processes in recognition of the fact that cultures never were or are monolithic but are always products of their own complex histories. The volume reflects a broad panorama of postcolonial debate about hybridity and its implications in different fields such as media, internet, film, photography, literature, languages, body, sexuality, migration, politics of nation and identity. The papers display a high awareness of theory and of the interaction between theoretical reflection about hybridity and interpretations of different objects; and they focus on different territories: Asia, Japan, China, Vietnam, Malaysia, India, Africa, the USA and Latin America. Among the conceptual merits of the conference were its transdisciplinarity, its transcultural approach, and its inspiring consideration of German-Turkish and Hispanic writers, performers and scholars not often dealt with in connection with postcolonialism and post-modernism. In this sense, the volume is an important, intriguing supplement to the contemporary debate in those fields.

The volume begins with two foundational theoretical texts: Alfonso de Toro's "Globalization – New Hybridities – Transidentities – Transnations: Recognition – Difference" and Vittoria Borsò's "Hybrid perceptions. A phenomenological approach to the relationship between mass media and hybridity".

**Alfonso de Toro's** contribution presents an epistemological, cultural and medial model of hybridity based on his own theoretical reflections on this subject since the beginning of the 90's. His work is rooted in the insights of Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Deleuze, Bhabha, Hayden White and others. De Toro concludes that within and beyond the postcolonial debate, terms like 'Identity', 'Nation', 'National Culture' and 'Ethnicity', and notions of 'Text', 'Fiction', 'History' and 'Arts' have all been progressively revised in light of postcolonial and post-structural theory. Thus redefined, these terms and notions are now regarded as intersections or crossings of culture, disciplines and scientific thinking. In this context, 'border', for example, is no longer a separating or excluding concept but rather a 'transversal' or 'hybrid' category – a site of enunciation and a strategy for thinking about the World, Life, Subject, Politics Culture and Science. And it is regarded as a nomadic and rhizomatic structure. The notion of the 'border' as a hybrid system has had a powerful impact on all fields of knowledge, science and life since the advent of post-structuralism and after moments like the fall of the Berlin 'iron curtain', after Huntington's very controversial positions, after the war in Iraq, and in the context of present day global economy and politics. De Toro seeks on the one side to avoid the evidence, that hybridity is always inherent to culture, to identity and nations (in this case hybridity is not an instrument of *difference*), and, on the other side, to avoid the terminological exuberance by the application of the term. De Toro emphasises that the meaning of 'hybridity' in modern cultural theory has nothing to do with the biological and zoological origins of the term (cf. de Toro 1997; 1999; 2001; 2002; 2004). Instead, he proposes a theoretical model that casts 'hybridity' in relation to epistemology, theory, methodology and transversality, translation, culture and passages, media production and perception, as well as urban and commercial organization and body (cf. de Toro 2001;

2002). This model has been largely accepted and applied, particularly in the USA and in Latin America. For this author, hybridity is a major concept – a paradigm and a *condition* of our time – and an object of very diverse reflections and definitions that is applicable in very different fields. De Toro understands hybridity as a strategy of dehierarchization, as a scenification of hybrid representations, and as a never-ending, nomadic, rhizomatic process of translation. He proposes a model for categorizing hybridity that distinguishes between seven different fields or levels (cf. de Toro 1997; 2002; 2004): 1. as an epistemological category; 2. as a theoretical/methodological category (a synonym of ‘transversal’ science); 3. as a category of cultural theory; 4. as a transmediatical category, as the use of various media, systems of signs, diverse aesthetics and mixed fields; 5. as an urban category, as form and different types of organisation; 6. as territory of the body; and 7. as technology and scientific category. On the basis of this model, the paper focuses on the contemporary debates about Nation, Race, Identity, Culture and Borders, arguing against the imperialist and nationalist model of society (Creed – Saliency – Protestant – White) developed in Huntington’s books *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996) and *Who are we?* (2004). De Toro confronts Huntington’s thesis with the concepts of the Mexican-US-American performer and theoretician Guillermo Gómez Peña, who has begun a tremendous translation process that he calls *borderizing* in the 90’s, and with Gloria Anzaldúa’s concept of the “new mestiza” and the “borderlands”. De Toro also proposes a new concept of society, border and culture related to William Louis’ conception of a “Latin-Culture as a global epistemology of différance”, as concept of rhizomatic and nomadic passages.

**Vittoria Borsò’s** contribution is conceptually related to de Toro’s view of hybridity insofar as she also understands hybridity as an epistemological instrument for thinking about the world and as a crossing condition, as opposed to a *differencia specifica* of particular cultures or regions. Following Maurice Merleau-Ponty, she views the subject relation as a multiple form of reciprocal relations and as an articulation and practice in space and time; like de Certeau (1988), she regards it as a paradoxical relationship between identity and difference. Borsò discusses the models of Latin American thinkers like Néstor García Canclini and Jesús Martín-Barbero, describing hybridity within a temporal process of modernization and identifying hybrid processes in the mediation of mass media. Following Carlos Monsiváis, she also contextualizes hybridity in urban spaces as a process that can transform the topological order of perceptions.

Borsò then focuses on several of Carlos Monsiváis’ works, and especially analyses the hybrid perception as a paradoxical process in Monsiváis’ *Chronicles in Los rituales del caos* (1995), where “Monsiváis shows a paradoxical relationship between the power of rituals (repetitions of mythical practices, suggestions of auratic media stars etc.) and their spectacular *mise en scène*” creating a sort of *mise en scène* of crossing spaces that, related to a specific configuration of time turns into a “third” space in which “structures become chaotic and rhizomatic eventually engendering hybrid perceptions”. This conception of hybrid perceptions in mass media allows Borsò to rethink some of the main topics of Latin American Studies. In this context, she considers in further analysis the “transformations through the technological eye”, the “dissemination and displacement

within the system of perception” (in the argumentative context of Benjamin and Merleau-Ponty). She examines “hybridity between orality and Writing as interference: Displacements between acoustic and visual systems” what leads her to “rethinking identity from the perspective of a hybrid epistemology” (what by de Toro is called “transversality” or “transversal theory” or “transversal disciplines”).

Another aspect pointed out by Borsò is the relation of hybridity to “a transcultural genealogy of History” as found, for example, in the process of the Conquest of Latin America in figures like ‘la Malinche’.

**Anna Clarke** analyses Arundhati Roy’s novel *The God of Small Things* (1997), which was excellently received by critics and the media in general. She reads the novel in the context of postcolonial parameters, particularly addressing problems of hybridity and syncretism, in order to describe the discursive interjections of *The God of Small Things* in contemporary Indian fiction in English. Clarke focuses hybridity based on formal, thematical and stylistic aspects of the text, she examines the productivity and ambivalence of utterances from the interstitial spaces as a “capacity to undermine and destabilise hierarchical claims to cultural or racial ‘purity’, redirecting the critical gaze from the category of inter-racial to inter-caste hybridizations”. The main purpose of the paper is to show how hybridity is used “to interrogate a complex network of repressive power structures in a specific postcolonial society, disclosing how the models of contemporary social relations frequently resemble the dialectics of a colonial scenario”. As result of the analysis, Clarke describes how this novel contributes “to modern debates by postulating a shift in the meaning of hybridity” in the line of “Bakhtinian notions of ‘organic’ hybridity, and playful confluence of linguistic and cultural influences of syncretism”.

**Gesa Westermann’s** paper “Benefiting from a shared identity – ‘Asianisms’ in Southeast Asia and Japan. A case study in Vietnamese national identity” examines how colonial discourses constructed national identities in Vietnam at the beginning of the 20th century. It focuses on the Vietnamese reception of Japanese modernisation as a model for nationalism and development. Westermann approaches hybridity in this paper from a diachronic perspective, concentrating her analysis on the second half of the twentieth century and covering the North-South Vietnamese conflict and the period of the Vietnam War. She does not use the traditional definition of identity that was elemental for the construction of Nation and Society in 19th century Europe (e.g. the common language, culture, history of a community). Rather, she bases her approach on Said’s, Giddens’ and Jameson’s notion that discourses of nation, identity and culture are constructions of the ‘self’ and ‘other’. To this, she adds Bhabha’s concept of “in-between” to address the specific problem of identities/hybridities in Asia, particularly in Vietnam.

**Hanna Reinikainen’s** contribution “Hybrid Bodies, Hybrid Music: Rereading Toni Morrison’s Jazz and ‘Authenticity’” deals with the concepts of hybrid music and hybrid bodies as shown in Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Tar Baby* (1981), and *Jazz* (1992). In all these texts, Morrison explores “the stereotyped ‘desire to be white’ and the quest for ‘black roots.’” Reinikainen’s aim is to analyse how Morrison uses jazz music as a central means of representing black bodies in dialogue with black and white jazz in

creating a hybrid net of cultural relations. Reinikainen describes how Morrison manipulates the bodies (skin bleaching) and the hair (hair straightening) of her characters as representations of the 'desire to be white'. She shows how Morrison "reconstructs images of the black body in Western thinking, American mainstream culture, and African American thinking" and explains how "through the metaphor of jazz, Morrison shows how the black and the white culture are in a constant dialogue, take cues reciprocally and together create 'America' by hybridizing it".

**Manuela Ribeiro Sanches** examines in her essay "Where is the post-colonial? In-betweenness, identity and 'Lusophonia' in trans/national contexts" the topic of hybridity in the Lusophone World (Portugal, Brazil and Angola) using examples from literature and popular music. After a brief review of the postcolonial condition in Portugal, Ribeiro analyses three popular Portuguese songs: Caetano Veloso's "Os Argonautas" (Veloso 1969), Caetano and Gilberto Gil's "Haiti" (Caetano, Gil 1993), and Amália Rodrigues' "Gente da minha terra". Caetano's song parodies and mimics the classical *fado*, one of the main identity references of Portugal, in order to deconstruct it through intersections between past and present times and different overlapping dichotomies. A good example is "Os Argonautas", an expression of the "aesthetics of the *Tropicalismo* movement, a sort of post-modern version of the modernist Anthropophagic Movement", and of "a new iconoclastic move against purist nationalists who defended the new Brazilian Popular Music", in which "Caetano and Gilberto Gil mixed Brazilian musical traditions with rock and pop influences, thus cannibalizing global influences and transforming them into new hybrid forms". "Haiti" represents another recent example of an aesthetics of musical cannibal hybridism build by American rap and Brazilian percussion by a translation and re-codification process, translating the global into the local, and vice versa, the local in the global, where other affiliations between Brazil, Africa and the Caribbean, the so called "black Atlantic", are evoked going beyond any common language creating an in-betweenness that Ribeiro calls the "Lusophone". In the second part of the paper Ribeiro treats two Angolan novels, Pepetela's *Yaka* and José Águas's *Creole* whose novels were translated into English under the aspects of a postcolonial "Lusophone" literature.

**Wilma Kiener's** paper on "Travelling images. Towards an Ethnographic Cinema of Montage" concentrates on the documentary film *Ixok Woman*. The film first shows a one-woman stage performance by Carmen Samayoa, who is represented as an indigenous woman from Guatemala. Later she denies this identity and explains that she is a professional ballet dancer who was raised in a metropolis. Kiener recognizes the need for a change of paradigm in ethnographic filmmaking: from a camera that originally aimed to "capture" and "save" endangered cultures to a camera that registers "travelling cultures" (migration, refugees and globalization) that thus far "have hardly had an impact on ethnographic filmmaking." She encourages ethnographic filmmakers "to think about an alternative cinematic poetic, one capable of understanding and conveying the experience of living in worlds of (dis)location and (a)synchronism". Kiener is preoccupied with the potential impact of the notion of 'travelling cultures' on "images, camera movements, takes, cuts, scenes, sequences, stories and social actors." The ethnographic practice of filmmaking, she argues, should be seen as part of the aesthetic stream of cinema. Just as

ethnographic filmmaking should not be excluded from the artistic history of cinema, she says, cinema should not be excluded from the history and art of ethnographic filmmaking.

**Birgit Bräuchler's** article, "Constructed Identities Online: The Performance of the Moluccan Crisis on the Internet", describes new digital hybridities that have emerged in the internet during the Moluccan conflict in Eastern Indonesia between Christians and Muslims. Bräuchler offers a panorama of the increasing numbers of Internet users in Eastern Indonesia and points out that despite the continuing danger of colonial globalization threatening Indonesian minority cultures, the Internet gives these minorities the opportunity to strengthen their own cultures and identities by a process of creolization. This process, she says, takes place "through the online encounter of spatially (geographically and socially) separated people of a culture like migrants and the ones that stayed in their home country". The Internet, she concludes, has become "an ideal space for the representation of groups and cultures spread around the globe and enables their re-territorialization in cyberspace".

**Jana Domdey's** contribution "'Sexy Kanake'? – Ambivalent Use of 'Kanak Sprach' in Recent German Cultural Production" focuses attention on an exciting contemporary theme: Turkish-German literature. Domdey analyses the ethnolect of German-Turkish culture in mainstream German literature and media productions, using Feridun Zaimoglu's *KanakSprach: 24 Mißtöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft* (1995) as an example. In this book, on the basis of interviews, Zaimoglu describes "the experience of young male Turkish German 'outcasts' of the lower classes in the multi-ethnic working class quarter of his residential city Kiel".

**Christoph Ramm's** paper "Head On. Hybridity as Fascination and Irritation in Constructing the Turkish Community in Germany" follows a similar line of research. In popular media discourse, Ramm sees a specific "constructive energy" of Turkish immigrants who, expressing their experience of living "between two cultures", regard "cultural 'in-betweenness' as a source of creativeness and success". The Turkish-German artists Akin and Zaimoğlu are examples. Ramm explores a "non-integrated" concept of culture in opposition to the dominant German political agenda, which encourages a strong assimilation of immigrants. Ramm compares the discourse of German *Leitkultur* with similarly self-legitimising ideological discourse in Samuel P. Huntington's *Foreign Policy* (March 2004a) and *Who are we?* (2004b). In these books, Huntington (see de Toro's contribution) agitates against Hispanics in the USA and declares them as danger to the cohesion of the nation and society. Ramm quotes many German weekly magazines, including *Der Spiegel* and *Stern*, which attack the existence of "parallel societies". In Ramm's opinion: The image of the Turkish community as a "parallel world" within the German society is [...] constructed and negotiated within the framework of traditional and newly reshaped discourses about Islam and the West, about Turkey and Europe – particularly intensifying after the attacks of September 11, 2001, and gaining momentum in current debates about Turkey's EU-accession or the ban on wearing headscarfs for German teachers. In the general public perception Turkish immigrants – as members of the largest and most visible immigrant community in Germany – stand for

the character of the typical *Ausländer* (“foreigner”), representing all the problems attached to the immigration issue.

**Roger McNamara’s** paper “Re-Narrating the Nation: Race, Sexuality and Hybridity in Aubrey Menen’s Autobiographies” focuses on the autobiographies of the Eurasian author Aubrey Menen (*Dead Man in the Silver Market* 1953 and *The Space within the Heart* 1970), who belongs by parentage to three different cultures – English, Irish and Indian – in which he always felt in-between. Menen was born in 1912 in England as the son of an Irish mother and an Indian father. Educated and raised as an Englishman, he spent most of his life in Rome and died in South India in 1989. On the basis of the two autobiographies, MacNamara describes, on the one hand, Menen’s strong critique of English nationalism and colonialism, and, on the other, his questioning of Indian nationalism and the tension of his hybrid condition between the two cultures. In addition to this, he gives insights into the private life of his homosexuality and the incestuous relationship that his mother wished to have with him. The problematic relationship that he had with his parents ultimately leads him to try to explore himself through the Indian scriptures of the *Upanishads*. MacNamara concludes that “Menen’s racial indeterminacy and homosexuality become a critique of an Indian nationalism bordering on fanaticism” and that “Menen’s racial hybridity and non-normative sexuality” undermines “a racially pure heteronormative English nationalism”. He emphasizes “the subversive power” and the “cojoint critique of nationalism” implicit in Menen’s “racial hybridity and non-normative sexuality” and concludes by cautioning against “an unqualified celebration of hybridity”.

**Melanie Klein’s** paper “Stages of difference: Aspects of hybridity in Wim Botha’s work” deals with questions of postcoloniality and hybridity in contemporary South African art. She asks if transitional identities can be found in South African art and, if so, whether ‘difference’ is perceived in this art “as a post-modern fetishisation or its post-colonial opposition”. Klein’s answer is terse as well as problematic: “In the contemporary situation the usage of postcoloniality as a universalizing ideology whether in nationalistic or institutional terms of Western perception is far from understanding South African reality. Rather, components of this term are used differently and virtuously to re-compose both immediate and global habits of viewing and perceiving post-apartheid South Africa”. She concludes that the use of hybridity in Wim Botha’s work “can equally be considered an instrument of postcoloniality *and* postmodernity”. Moreover, Bhabha’s notion of mimicry can also be found in his work (especially in *Commune: Onomatopoeia* and *Commune: Suspension of disbelief*).

**Eric Anchimbe’s** contribution “Hybrid Linguistic Identities in Postcolonial Africa: The Intricacy of Identity Opportunism in Multilingual Cameroon” analyses hybrid identity constructions in everyday Cameroonian multilingual discourse from a linguistic, social and cultural point of view. He pays particular attention to how Cameroon’s complex social, economic and political language ecology forces Cameroonians to choose constantly between languages (home languages, French, English, Creoles, etc.) to satisfy “requirements of identity”, “needs for unity in divergence” and “needs for convenience and security groupings”. In this process, languages play a central roll in constructing

identity and providing criteria of exclusion, adoption and transmission. Anchimbe states that in Cameroon, “any language implicitly means the spread of the identity attached to that language or the creation of new identities based on the perception and reception of that language in the specific context”. Cameroon, he concludes, “stands as a unique case of multilingualism and multiethnicity in Africa”.

**Pradeep Jeganathan’s** after-word was prepared on his return home to Sri Lanka after the conference, to – what he calls – a Postnational Location. He identifies “the place to be” and “the place to write from” as important aspects in theorising about hybridity. He begins with a close reading of Homi Bhabha’s *Location of Culture*, quoting the first line of the book: “It is the trope of our times to locate the question of culture in the realm of the *beyond*” (Bhabha 1994: 1). The *beyond* is a passage, stairwell, a liminal place; it is the *location* which “opens up the possibility of cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (ibid.: 4). Relating this concept to the Postnational Location of Sri Lanka, Jeganathan calls hybridity the “daughter of ethnicity”. Both try to “show that the claims of nationalism to purity, are suspect, for they fall apart at the seams”. What Jeganathan demonstrates in his location is also implied by the other contributions in this book. “It is that ‘hybridity’ as a category is enabled by the particular localisation of its theorizing”.

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