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## Postcolonial Literature, Hybridity and Culture

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### Abstract

Forming one of the central themes in the discourse on postcolonial culture/s and identity/ies, hybridity is an operative verbalization of ambivalence and mutability illustrating a dynamic stride of remonstrance and resistance in opposition to a domineering ideological and cultural colonial hegemony. As a prime mace against oppressive imperial power and “grand narratives,” hybridity locates and echoes the in-betweenness of the *self* and the *other* offering a rupture at the binarial and oppositional dissertation fashioned by the dominant authority. Often consequential of indecisive passages and incursions of identities, hybridity is at once plural, complex, subversive, intricate and sometimes contradictory cultural interaction. Emerging from this potential creative space is the discourse of postcolonial literature as hybrid that voices and reflects the nuances of hybridity beyond creative and critical realms as understanding to elaborate upon the interconnections between identities, experiences and cultures that are inert and monolithic bestowed by the colonial and hierarchical. This paper is an attempt to discuss the varied aspects of hybridity, the manner in which it is part of a culture yet influences the emergent cultures and its association to postcolonial literature as hybrid.

**Key words: hybridity, postcolonial literature, Third Space, culture**

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Hybridity is a cultural transactive creating a temporal interactive sequential between the colonizer and the colonized bestowing a conciliation inestimably concussive beyond the managed identity of the dominant. Transpiring out of a cognizant creative interface, at once prolific and reciprocative, hybridity commemorates and privileges “a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-betweenness, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference” (Hoogvelt 158). Hybridity emerges in the context where the colonial authority attempts to transform the identity of the *other* compassing within a “singular universal framework” but unsuccessful in his endeavor eventually fabricating something new but ‘familiar’.

**Hybridity and Postcolonial Culture:** Hybridity is anticipatorily resourceful allowing the “creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zones produced by colonization” (Ashcroft et al. 20). It is situated as an antithesis to essentialism or “the belief in invariable and fixed properties which define the ‘whatness’ of a given entity” (Fuss, xi). The cultural contact zones are a locale of compound and asymmetrical actions shoving and extending the *other* to a nifty space of assimilation and resistance. These “contact zones” links varied aspects that facilitate and catalyzes the engagement of “translation between cultures” (Pratt 6) resulting “borderline affects and identifications” (Bhabha, *Culture* 167). The crucible of cultural transaction and translation, “contact zones” are periods of accost that trickles affirmative and “productive instability” bearing hybrid identities. The possible choice, as Bhabha views, might one of being “exotic multiculturalism” (*Interview* 211) that prepares to integrate the cultural splinters partaking in the impressions of subversive hybrid identities.

Rutherford identifies the significance of the process of hybridity for not being “able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the ‘Third

Space', which enables other positions to emerge" (211). The 'Third Space' is the kernel hybrid position, mostly "unrepresentable of itself" yet assuming and assessing the fluidity of culture and binarial oppositions within this forceful process that visualizes and cautions conditions discursive and hierarchical. One might also argue that hybridity, consequential of the procedures of specific and indeterminate yet yielding relations, is not two separate imaginative moments from which the third emerges but hybridity itself is the 'Third Space' which facilitate other positions to come into sight. The "third space", at once contentious and prospective is the "in-between space" –the platform for resistance and acculturation is groomed. The 'Third Space', thus, "constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity, that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (Bhabha, *Location* 37). The disproportionate haggles now and then crosses the threshold of "discontinuous intertextual temporality of cultural difference" (*Location* 38). Therefore, "the 'inter' – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *inbetween* space – that carries the burden of culture" (*Location* 38). With the emergence of 'Third Space' the politics of binarial conflict are thwarted unbolting innumerable possibilities for the *other* to evince their importance of being themselves and the insubstantial space they negotiate along these borderlines.

Colonial power and culture carried monolithic acting upon the *other* rather than allowing the subject to act. As Habermas suggests, "reacting to the homogenizing pressure of a material world culture, new constellations often emerge which do not so much level out existing cultural differences as create new multiplicities of hybridized forms" (75). Hybridity, foiling the nonlinear power operative methods, comes to light as "a social reality with historical specificity" (Prabhu 2), is the moment of contingency of cultural spaces, which are neither homogenous nor closed but hybrid in nature, transforming (creating and re-creating) subjects participating. Moreover, it "questions about the ways in which contemporary thinking has broken absolutely with the radicalized formulations of the past" (Young 6). The 'Third Space' envisaged by Bhabha is not an inert category of but a productive giving way to be 'interruptive, interrogative and enunciative' pushing further away from the polarizing and antagonistic thoughts initiating "new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation" (*Location* 1). The concept of hybridity foresees the politics of liberation allowing a reconfiguration and destabilization of power. Stuart Hall calls this process "unsettling, recombination, hybridization and 'cut and mix' arising out of 'diaspora experience' (quoted in Prabhu 9).

The theory of hybridity, though, have given a categorical spur to the postcolonial theorizing and interpretation, is brought into critical scrutiny from various aspects of cultures, identities, experiences, philosophies and interactions. Failing to register few would make this minute discussion curtailed. Hybridity, though, emerged as a postcolonial theoretical notion, it is a "colonial concept" which "served certain interests, which were central to the colonial enterprise"(Prabhu xii). Therefore, varied subaltern realities of coercions might not find place within the theory of hybridity. One might also notice, when there is an extra emphasize on hybridity, there is a negligence of history. Anjali Prabhu also identifies a "tendency to fall into a discourse of victimhood and/or of narrow ethnicities" (14). Robert Young reminds us of the danger of turning the hybridity discourse into the discourse of racism.

**Postcolonial Literature as Hybrid:** Rutherford informs that "all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity" (211). Postcolonial literature/s, therefore, as a produce and component of postcolonial culture is soaked up by and engendered within the ambience of hybridity Postcolonial text, therefore, is "a hybrid, a dynamic mixture of literary and cultural forms, genres, styles, languages, motifs, tropes and so forth" (xiv). Postcolonial literature/s as hybrid opens up countless intense and unwrapping possibilities taking beyond

the claims of canonical universalisms to situate experiences and identities those are specific and poignant for the expression of the *other* in a language, metaphor and expression of their own with renewed discourse pushing beyond the monolithic binarial opposites both for the author and the audience. Grobman explains:

... hybridity does not privilege or subsume competing forms, and that it enables readers to escape limiting binaries by considering the countless relationships among a text's many variables, both within the text itself and with other texts. The hybrid text is a volatile mixture of parts that work against, within, and among one another and it is fraught with tensions and conflicts. However, these very qualities offer transformative possibilities for reading, interpretation appreciation, politics and pedagogy (xiv).

“How does one conceptualise impure, hybrid, incommensurable modes of thinking and being, without filtering them of their messiness?” questions Akil Gupta (Gupta 6). Postcolonial literature is a “shift from the cultural as an epistemological object to culture as an enactive, enunciatory site” (*Location* 178). Culture is becomes active paving the literature that emerges from its bosom to be a cultural transactive. Therefore, unfurling cultural, epistemological, aesthetic and literary constructs is the flesh and blood of any literature that attempts to subvert colonial/neocolonial/hierarchical categorical frameworks. “It reveals the ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority and enables a form of subversion founded on that uncertainty, that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention” (*Location* 173). Beyond being innovative in the spectacular literary forms and new methods of presenting the personal, particular and precise rapport with the domineering milieu, postcolonial literature offers an intervention catering to the creative and critical psyche of the author and audience alike.

Postcolonial literature/s as “symbol-forming and subject-constituting, interpellative practices” (*Interview* 210) actualizes enduringly to produce potentially fresh meanings and aperturing up possible change and inviting impending formations of new symbols. Hybridity results from “the emergence of the interstices—the overlap and displacement of domains of difference—that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated” (*Location* 2). Language induces the colonial past methodizing a discourse of identity in the postcolonial discursive vacuity replicating the interest, identity and experiences of nation, community, cultural value of the *other*. One must also be reminded Hall's view that cultural identity “belongs to the future as much as to the past” and it “undergoes constant transformation” identical with historical changes (Hall 236). Despite the fact that the hybrid cultural identity/ies is/are in a constant fluctuation connecting and influencing postcolonial literature as hybrid in ways that might cross the unassuming holiness of the hierarchic stereotypes the questions one might ponder are:

... how does one put forth a narrative of one voice to incarnate desires that are in themselves hybrid, but that also come from multiple sources. How can the speaking (unitary) subject convey and perform the multiple, which can also include contraries? How, also, do we make the moment of representation (of) *count*—that is, how do we put it to work and in this sense enable it to intervene, thus calling up its second meaning (of representation by)? (Prabhu, 14)

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