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# Introduction

To probe the fundamental question of hybridity – the focus of this study – is like journeying into the soul of our civilization. Hybridity or *métissage* in its various shades (biological, cultural, religious, political, technological) has been a feature of all societies, from the Sumerians and Egyptians through to the Greeks and Romans down to modern times. Yet, in contemporary criticism, more particularly in postcolonial scholarship, hybridity is usually addressed from a theoretical and historical perspective that rarely extends beyond the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This study departs from this limited synchronic view of hybridity; it adopts a diachronic approach encompassing a much wider historical, political, and ideological spectrum. In offering a wide-ranging view on *métissage* reaching back to the ancient civilizations, this study does not merely intend to prove that all cultures are hybrid. This has now become a mere truism. Rather, this diachronic methodology is keen to resituate the power dynamics and multi-rooted nature of hybridity as both a practice and a discourse overlooked in postcolonial studies.

This contextualized, historicized perspective on *métissage* is valuable on various counts. First, it should enlighten us about the multifaceted character of hybridity as a historical fact, a discursive practice, and as a political as well as an ideological construction. It must, above all, help us to dissipate a great deal of the confusion surrounding the contemporary discussions of hybridity in the humanities and beyond. It might ultimately lead us to realize, among other things, that much of the postcolonial conceptualization of hybridity is teleological, rather than completely new and disruptive, as is usually thought.

The present study is divided into two parts, productively dialoguing with and illuminating each other. The first part of the book is entirely devoted to discussions of cultural, biological, technological, religious,

## 2 *Questioning Hybridity, Postcolonialism and Globalization*

and administrative hybridity from ancient Greece to the nineteenth century. This is, of course, a historical overview rather than an exhaustive examination of hybridity. Its overall methodology consists in mapping the archaeological structure of the practice and discourse of *métissage* with the aim of providing as broad a picture as possible of this much-discussed yet still relatively obscure phenomenon – at least as it is conceptualized in postcolonial studies. Together with illustrating the prominence of the practice of *métissage* within ancient and modern civilizations, this section pays close attention to the ways in which hybridity was experienced, construed, constructed, and manipulated across history to serve various, often contradictory, cultural, political, ideological, and economic ends. Through close analyses of the colonial encounters within Greek, Roman, and modern Western empires it brings to light the myriad of forces that presided over *métissage*. This overview is broad and informative enough to allow us to grasp the power relationships within which classical hybridity was articulated. Most importantly, it must help us to seize the intricate rhetorical and ideological designs, the unevenness, the totalizing impulse, the exclusionary and inclusionary practices, and the excisions attendant upon the practice as well as discourse of *métissage*.

In order better to trace the breadth and the cultural, ideological, political, and economic implications of the process of *métissage* the first part of the book focuses on a number of key historical periods, among them the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt, fifth-century BC Greece, Alexander the Great's Persia, the Roman empire, the Visigoth realm and the Carolingian Christian kingdom. These periods are assessed in relation to our central topic of hybridity, with the principal objective of showing how cultural, scientific, administrative, and biological *métissage* was conceived, practised, encouraged or deterred. Particular attention is paid to the tensions and contradictions inherent in the handling of *métissage* in the ancient world; tensions between the perception of hybridity as, on the one hand, a means of cultural and epistemic enrichment and political empowerment, and on the other, a source of social disorder and racial degeneration. Among the leading figures of the ancient world brought to the debate in this section are Plato, Aristotle, Pericles, Euripides, Alexander the Great, and Virgil. Their views exemplify the ancient ambivalence towards *métissage*; an ambivalence which, as we shall see, is also present in most modern conceptualizations of *métissage*.

Alexander the Great is unusual among men in ancient times in having clearly expressed a positive view of *métissage* in all its forms (administrative, cultural, biological, and so on). Alexander's politics of

hybridity, enacted in the aftermath of his conquest of Persia, constituted a theoretical projection as well as a practical military and political move; that is to say, it was a case of strategic hybridism whose aim was to consolidate and strengthen his empire. As the historical evidence shows, shortly after taking possession of Persia, Alexander encouraged marriages between the Persian nobility and the Greek soldiers and officers. Alexander himself married a Persian woman, Roxane, the daughter of the defeated Persian king Oxyartes, captured by Alexander the Great in 327 BC. It goes without saying that Alexander's marriage with Oxyartes's daughter was a political alliance intended to tighten his grip on his Eastern empire. At the same time, in his promotion of interracial marriages and his effort to blend East and West into a common civilization, Alexander also projected hybridity as a universal norm. Such a perception of cross-racial relationships can appear revolutionary when gauged in the light of the Greco-Macedonian race politics of both Alexander's time and earlier periods. Notwithstanding the political, ideological, and messianic motives underlying his discourse, the fact remains that Alexander's ethics of hybridity largely departed from Greek notions of ethnicity laid out by Plato, Aristotle, and Pericles. All three, indeed, endorsed racial purity and the clear-cut distinction between allegedly backward 'barbarians' and superior Greeks.

Plato and Aristotle, for example, both recognized the benefits of cultural and scientific *métissage*. They openly acknowledged ancient Greece's indebtedness to Egypt; they even regarded this ancient civilization as the archive of human civilization. When it came to racial mixing, however, the two philosophers categorically rejected interracial marriages involving Greeks and non-Greeks. In keeping with his assumptions of racial purity Aristotle in *Politics* excludes individuals of mixed descent from high governmental positions. He goes on to remind his fellow citizens that racial mixing might lead to social unrest and moral degeneration. In *The Republic* Plato, too, emphasizes the need to preserve racial purity by avoiding interracial marriages, which he identifies with degeneration and fears as a source of social and political chaos. Pericles was similarly a strong advocate of racial purity. Pericles was an influential orator, politician, and general in Athens during the Peloponnesian and Persian wars. As a statesman he drafted a law which stipulated that only those whose parents were Athenians on both sides could be counted as Athenian citizens.

Among the Romans, it is Virgil who best articulates the ambivalence of the discourse of hybridity. Writing more than three centuries after Plato and Aristotle, Virgil, in *The Aeneid*, offers us an enlightening

account of hybridity; one that, in many ways, is emblematic of the Romans' conception of *métissage* and otherness. The Roman empire is commonly, and correctly, described as one of the most mixed or multi-ethnic empires. Within the Roman empire, cultural difference was usually accepted and accommodated; racial difference and biological hybridity, on the other hand, were often thrust aside, if not simply outlawed; at best, otherness was incorporated into and submerged by the hegemonic imperial same. In *The Aeneid*, Virgil relates these two concurrent Roman impulses towards *métissage*. In brief, in this poem Virgil is not completely dismissing biological *métissage*, as did Plato and Aristotle; he is rather articulating a subtle form of hybridization which betrays a totalizing orientation. While assuming that the Romans and the Trojans/Teucrians/Eusonians would blend through marriage, he also adds that the offspring of these mixed unions were to be Latin in almost every respect: Latin in physical appearance, in dress, in speech, and in customs. In short, Virgil simultaneously asserts difference as part of the same and denies this difference any distinctive and noteworthy contribution to the overall hybrid construct. Reclaimed as monolithically Latin, the hybrid progeny of Virgil's poem are cast in what I call the space of the impossible; a condition which, as will be demonstrated in the course of this study, is characteristic of most *métis* people in the European empires established in later centuries.

The Roman disavowal of racial mixing, underlined above, was to continue well beyond Virgil's time. In the following centuries, the Roman attitudes to mixed marriages became even more radical, especially when Imperial Rome embraced Christianity from the fourth century AD. The Romans' extreme views on racial mixing are widely illustrated in the *Codex Theodosianus* (AD 365) which made marriage between Romans and 'barbarians', the Jews in particular, a capital offence. It is important also to stress here that contempt for cross-cultural and interracial marriages was by no means restricted to the Romans or to the ancient Greeks before them. It was a recurrent pattern in the Western kingdoms and empires from the Fall of Rome through the Middle Ages and beyond: the Visigoths, Carolingians, Spanish, French, and British, to name only a few, all objected to interracial mixing and the resulting half-caste children.

These ancient discourses on *métissage* will serve throughout as reference points in the light of which are assessed modern colonial discourses on *métissage* as well as postcolonial theory's handling of the issue of hybridity; and by modern I mean from the late fifteenth century on. The main aim in discussing the topic of hybridity within a broad historical

perspective embracing ancient and modern times is to shed fresh light on the epistemic, ideological, and political power structures that have informed and widely determined the practice and discourse of hybridity across history. As both a historical fact and a theoretical tool, hybridity has a long, complex, and controversial history of its own. A widespread practice in the ancient empires, *métissage* in its manifold dimension was also prominent within modern colonial empires, to which Chapter 3 is devoted. Briefly, hybridity emerged as a major preoccupation in nineteenth-century colonialist discourse, prompted by scientific racism and the fear of cultural and racial degeneration. As was expected, within colonial politics and discourse, imbued with racial prejudice, hybridity was decried; it was essentially perceived as a source of moral corruption as well as racial decay. Against this background, the modern colonial empires' representation and management of hybridity are examined in detail, with an emphasis on the ways in which this *métissage* was ideologically constructed and politically managed. Close attention is given to the cultural, racial, social, and political epistemologies presiding over the idea of *métissage* and, more generally, over the Western imperial perception of otherness.

Modern colonial hybridity has been much discussed in postcolonial theory over the last three decades. Yet, the fact that much of the postcolonial assessment of this issue is exclusively synchronic makes the present diachronic, wide-ranging approach to the practice as well as the discourse of *métissage* all the more necessary. The whole of the book's second part critically engages with contemporary postcolonial theory's discussion of hybridity. It offers a fresh, challenging theoretical and empirical alternative perspective; one that not only radically questions mainstream postcolonial conceptualizations of hybridity, but also indicates original ways in which to reorient the whole postcolonial debate.

Broadly speaking, the issue of hybridity, alongside the attendant metaphor of the third space, has become established as a fundamental topic in the humanities over the last two decades or so. In postcolonial studies hybridity and the third space are closely linked to Homi Bhabha; both concepts being introduced and extensively glossed in *The Location of Culture* (1994). Bhabha adopted the term 'hybridity' and divested it of its colonial connotations of ontological and racial degeneration. With its adoption by Bhabha and, more generally, by postcolonial scholars, the concept of hybridity has seen its semantics rehabilitated and widely inflected to stand for inclusiveness, dialogism, subversion, and contestation of grand narratives. For most scholars in postcolonial and cultural studies hybridity represents a crucial emancipatory tool releasing the

representations of identity as well as culture from the assumptions of purity and supremacy that fuel colonialist, nationalist, and essentialist discourses. A key feature of contemporary theoretical debates is a marked propensity to assess cultural encounters primarily by means of the metaphors of the in-between or third space, utilized as substitutes for the contested centre-periphery paradigm. Bhabha argues in this respect that cultural identity always emerges in the contradictory and ambivalent space, which unsettles all claims to cultural purity. In other words, as articulated in postcolonial studies hybridity theory sounds like a new form of utopianism; one that functions mostly as the yardstick by which are exclusively assessed the cultural encounters and processes of transnational communications at large.

In terms of methodology, the theory of hybridity and the third space is inspired by and intensely reflects the cultural turn and poststructuralist ethos predominant in the humanities from the 1970s onwards. This mode of conceptualization of culture and identity has drawn widespread enthusiasm. As a result, there is a general consensus within postcolonial and cultural studies regarding the conceptual usefulness and subversive potential of hybridity and the third space. Bhabha's conceptualization of hybridity has also elicited bitter criticism from a number of scholars, among them Aijaz Ahmad, Arif Dirlik, and Ziauddin Sardar. These dissenting voices usefully draw attention to the inadequacies of Bhabha's theory of hybridity and the third space. However, their critique of the middle-ground epistemology is on the whole limited; it falls short of providing a sufficiently contextualized approach that considers hybridity from a broad historical, cultural, and geopolitical perspective. Nor, for that matter, do these critics suggest an alternative, comprehensive, sound theoretical paradigm by which contemporary cultural, social, and political global networks and discourses can be adequately appraised. As it critically engages with these passionate, postcolonial, controversial debates, this contextualized study profoundly rethinks the discourse of hybridity and the third space, tracing its conceptual shortcomings and empirical mystifications. In the process, it provides a fresh theoretical outlook that transcends the linguistic, spatial, and postmodernist paradigm on which contemporary discussions of hybridity are based. A particular consideration will be given to crucial issues that are under-examined or simply overlooked in postcolonial hybridity discourse: race politics, class, global neocolonialism. Also freshly reappraised in this discussion are the intricate connections of postcolonialism with the postmodernist ethos, which can be justly considered as the conceptual, ideological, and epistemic matrix of postcolonial theory.

Postcolonial theory's enmeshment with the postmodernist ethos has been caustically criticized by many scholars, and rightly so, given the extent to which the adopted postmodern vocabulary has contributed to obscuring the postcolonial debate on hybridity and other major topics. While breaking away from the postmodernist ethos predetermining postcolonial discourse on hybridity, this study also questions the widely held view that hybridity theory is a subversive, counter-hegemonic agency. It demonstrates instead that not only is hybridity discourse accommodated by global neoliberal/neocolonial power structures, but also that the very ambivalence or indeterminacy of this discourse is what made this accommodation possible in the first place. Together with uncovering the tacit complicities of the theory of hybridity with neocolonial global power structures, the bulk of the argument developed here throws doubt on the widely accepted idea that hybridity discourse is a privileged site of contestation of binary thinking and essentialism. In a kind of theoretical restorative justice, the present alternative theoretical and empirical reflection questions the postcolonial categorical rejection of binarism; it argues that certain forms of binarism, such as the anti-colonial brand embodied by Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire, deserve a critical reappraisal by postcolonial scholars. As my argument goes, this type of resistive binarism merits re-evaluation in the light of contemporary neoliberal doxa and its attendant neocolonial practices; a necessary reassessment that is likely to enlighten us about the usefulness of resistive binarism as an anti-colonial tool. This re-evaluation must above all induce us to consider more seriously the relevance of this resistive binarism as a counter-hegemonic agency in today's neoliberal/neocolonial, globalized world. As it rehabilitates anti-hegemonic binarism disparaged in postcolonial studies, this critical approach demonstrates the extent to which postcolonial theory, more specifically hybridity discourse, is in many ways surreptitiously repeating Manichean and essentialist discursive as well as epistemic patterns against which the whole postcolonial ethos articulates. The core of my argument consists, in sum, of framing a critical, contextualized, and balanced view on hybridity and the third space; a view that shies away from both modern colonial castigation of *métissage* and postmodern celebration of hybridity or in-betweenness. It also moves away from the culturalist and spatial turn to embrace a materialist conceptualization of hybridity. In a related way, this corrective interpretative lens is intended to show how far the discourse of hybridity has always been, and still is, closely connected to social prestige as well as to hegemonic structures of power with which it maintains complex, symbiotic relationships.

In the main, the book's second part highlights the conceptual and empirical inadequacy of the theory of hybridity and the third space. It shows that as it is framed in postcolonial studies, hybridity discourse is in many respects reductive, if not altogether mystifying. Fundamentally, the issue at stake here consists in deeply interrogating the third-space narratives by placing them within a wider historical, cultural, ideological, and geopolitical context, a contextualization widely neglected in postcolonial and cultural theory. This context, as mentioned earlier, includes ancient as well as modern colonial representations and discursive constructions of hybridity. It also integrates a sustained discussion of the global economic, political, and financial power structures that determine the third space and hybridity discourse.

Examining the third space and hybridity within the wide context of globalization – which is a central preoccupation in this monograph – should add an important materialist dimension to postcolonial discussions of these major concepts. Probing the interrelationships between the postcolonial and the global, on the other hand, must broaden the theoretical as well as the ideological scope of postcolonial studies by bringing them to bear upon the political, economic, and ideological global forces that shape our contemporary world. This attempt to unveil the intricate connections between the postcolonial and the global is a necessary conceptual and empirical undertaking. It primarily intends to trace the ways in which hybridity discourse relates to the global hegemonic power structures which, too, are hybrid; they operate within the murky third space of power and coercion, whereby Western private and public military, economic, financial, and cultural institutions dovetail with Third-World comprador elite groups to reap huge material benefits from a globalization that Third-World elites officially decry. Ironically, however, postcolonial theory overlooks these global hybridities of domination (neoliberal/neocolonial structures of power mentioned above); just as it ignores the global hybridities of resistance (inter-continental, cross-cultural, anti-neoliberal struggles). My belief is that these neglected narratives of both hegemony and resistance partake of a postcolonial geopolitical amnesia that is closely examined in the second part of this book.

The phenomenon of globalization has elicited much interest in the social sciences over the last decades, generating from the mid-1980s onwards thousands of articles and books. Paradoxically, despite inducement from such postcolonial scholars as Ania Loomba (1998) to engage with 'globality', postcolonial theory has widely disregarded the connections between the postcolonial and the global. This lack of commitment

to material globality is reflected in the dearth of postcolonial scholarship dealing with the phenomenon of globalization. Over the last five years, only a handful of books directly exploring the relationship of postcolonial theory with globalization have been published, and the bulk of these are written by scholars in social sciences, political science in particular, rather than by postcolonial theorists based in the departments of literature where much postcolonial talk is taking place. Prominent among these writings are *Globalization and the Postcolonial World: The New Political Economy of Development* (Hoogvelt 2001), *Geopolitics and the Postcolonial: Rethinking North South Relations* (Slater 2004), *The Postcolonial and the Global* (Krishnaswamy and Hawley 2008), and *Globalization and Postcolonialism: Hegemony and Resistance in the Twenty-First Century* (Krishna 2009).

These works variously address postcolonial and global issues, although without sufficiently exploring the entanglement of hybridity discourse and the third space with the hegemonic global power structures. *The Postcolonial and the Global* edited by Krishnaswamy and Hawley (2008), both working in the field of cultural studies, however, does explicitly raise the question of postcolonial theory's relation to globality in general and global studies in particular. In this edited collection, Krishnaswamy and Hawley point up the postcolonial and culturalist scholars' hesitant attitude towards the global in terms that reveal deep theoretical and ideological anxieties. Following Ania Loomba's advice (1998), Krishnaswamy and Hawley exhort postcolonial studies to commit itself deeply and productively to globalization. They nonetheless refer to a host of methodological and ideological problems in this direction. They, for instance, do not know what would be the 'terms' and finality of such an engagement. Krishnaswamy and Hawley further order globalization studies and postcolonial theory in a hierarchical pattern, considering the former as conceptually inferior to the latter. In the process, they stress the extreme dependence of globalization studies on postcolonial vocabulary. Knowing the postcolonial privileging of hybridity and bricolage over essence or purity, it is surprising to discover the extent to which Krishnaswamy and Hawley insist on postcolonial theory as the conceptual matrix of globalization studies. Ironically, their argument can sound like an attempt to undermine the very postcolonial ethos on which they rely, and which is characteristically founded on the murky and motley. Overall, Krishnaswamy and Hawley's deliberation falls short of achieving its ambitious pedagogical and theoretical project. For despite much palavering about the need for postcolonial theory to involve itself with material globality, we are finally left in the dark as to how this engagement could be materialized. The editors' failure to

live up to their initial ambition in the end may read as a sign of their awareness that a genuine, efficacious engagement of postcolonial studies with material globality would require a deep questioning of the postcolonial ethos; an urgent self-scrutiny that neither Krishnaswamy and Hawley nor postcolonial scholars at large seem inclined to undertake.

As might be inferred from the argument above, my discussion of the relationship between the postcolonial and the global, central to this study, precisely takes off from where Krishnaswamy and Hawley left and proposes answers to the queries that they have raised. As it scrutinizes the postcolonial deficit with regard to globality, it indicates the ways in which postcolonial theory could efficiently engage with globality. More specifically, it suggests how postcolonial discourse could become a genuinely counter-hegemonic force efficiently mobilized against global neoliberal doxa and its attendant neocolonial power structures. This alternative theoretical and ideological reflection is based on a radical ethics of engagement and representation; one that requires a questioning of the whole postcolonial ethos and its underlying hegemonic epistemologies. The book offers a fresh, challenging, critical approach which ultimately consists in a complete emancipation, not to say decolonization, of postcolonial theory as well as its discursive and epistemic archive.

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