

## CROSSING BORDERS: JOURNEY INTO OTHERNESS

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### Abstract

Transgression concepts such as 'hybridity', 'alterity', 'diaspora', 'creolization', 'transculturalization' and 'syncretism' have to an increasing extent become key concepts in various attempts at escaping the problems of suppression and exclusion involved in notions of purity, be it the purity of race or culture. The purpose of this paper is to focus on the concepts of transgression and to try to develop conceptual spaces within which it is possible to grasp and to study cultural identity without resorting to cultural essentialism. The paper explores the concept of hybridity, besides a critique of assumptions (those of purity, of marginality and identity). This paper also focuses on cultural creativity - innovation and authenticity, ownership of cultural forms, and of technological modes of cultural mix. From an analytical perspective, the paper emphasizes the complexities of the power in transgressions as well as in constructions of essentialist identities. We need to move beyond the limitations of both identity politics and the critique of essentialism without losing sight of the commitment to social, historical and cultural critique. Focusing on the concept of hybridity, I argue that we should not only be concerned with what is hybridity, but also how are the notions of and distinctions between transgression and purity applied, by whom, to what ends and articulated with which other elements. Turning the concepts of transgression into analytical, rather than descriptive, they will open up new fields of study and new possibilities for critique.

**Keywords:** *hybridity, identity, marginality*

### 1. CULTURAL IDENTITY AND DIASPORA<sup>1</sup>

In this subchapter, I intend to explore the term *identity* and whether or not it is an adequate term to use when referring to cultural identities in the Caribbean region. Ultimately, I intend to argue that these cultural identities fit the term diaspora in all senses of the term. Firstly, I intend to discuss the term *identity* itself exploring arguments by different critics on the concept. Secondly, I intend to apply the concept of *diaspora* to the cultural identity formation to

attempt to compensate for the western perspective. The concept of identity is complex and different meanings of it are evident to offer good starting points for an investigation of the concept of identity.

If in need of a definition, one looks first to dictionaries. Here is the most relevant entry for identity in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (10<sup>th</sup> edition, 1999): "the fact of being who or what a person or thing is" or "the distinct personality of an individual regarded as a persisting entity" (*OED*, 705). In addition to this, Beller and Leerssen also asserts that: "*Identity becomes to mean being identifiable, and is closely linked to the idea of 'permanence through time': something remaining identical with itself from moment to moment*" (Beller and Leerssen, 2001: 1). They reveal "the other side" (Beller and Leerssen, 2001: 1) of identity by referring to what they call the synchronic meaning of the concept of identity. This refers to the "unique sense of self" (Beller and Leerssen, 2001: 4) that a person has about his own. This type of identity, also called "ipse identity" (Ricoeur, 1992: 78) implies a first person perspective. From this point of view, this sense of self is representing one's autobiographical narrative with the ever changing actions and reactions experienced in the real life. The process of rewriting the story of somebody's life enables the person to reinterpret past experience and is essential for acting as a person with a sense of self in the present and the future. Moreover, the identity of a person (ipse identity) cannot be captured in typologies of roles or of fixed (group) characteristics used to describe the identity of individuals (idem identity), which takes a more objective, or third person perspective. The way somebody is identified and categorised - by others and by him/herself - does influence his/her identity. This self-

construction is negotiated by the narratives people invent to tell the story of their life, which narratives are of course determined to a large extent by their interactions with others. However, from the point of view of the individual sense of self, people need a certain amount of control over the borders between self and others.

Following the analysis above, I would argue that identity can figure into the explanation of action in two main ways, which parallel the two sides of the word's present meaning. Recall that "identity" can mean either a social category or, in the sense of personal identity, distinguishing features of a person that form the basis of his or her dignity or self-respect.

The use of different theories and methodologies by different critics has affected the ways in which researchers conceptualize *identity*, and it has also resulted in the simultaneous use of different terms that describe *identity* as a *socio-cultural construct*. In agreement with this, we opted for the term *cultural identity*, which was defined as "an individual's realization of his or her place in the spectrum of cultures and purposeful behavior directed on his or her enrollment and acceptance into a particular group, as well as certain characteristic features of a particular group that automatically assign an individual's group membership" (Sysoev,

2001: 37-38). In this respect, individuals' *cultural identity* as a construct consists of a countless number of facets. Most commonly referred to and described in literature are the following facets or types of one's cultural identity: racial, ethnic, social, economic, geopolitical, gender, religious, ability/disability, language, professional, etc. (see figure 1). Each of these facets represents a specific category, within which a person has specific membership(s).

Stuart Hall's thesis is that rather than thinking of identity as an "already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent" (Hall, 1996: 145), we should think instead of "identity as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall, 1996: 167). Hall points out that there are two principal ways of thinking about (cultural) identity. The traditional model views identity:

"(...) in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common..." (Hall, 1996: 393).

Stuart Hall disapproves the view of cultural identity as something that can be defined "in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common" (Hall, 1996: 393). For Hall, however, it is better to envision a "quite different practice, one based on 'not the rediscovery but the *production* of identity'". Not an identity grounded in the archaeology, but in the *re-telling* of the past" (Hall, 1996: 423). Such a viewpoint would entail acknowledging that this is an "act of imaginative rediscovery" (Hall, 1996: 425), one which involves "imposing an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation, which is the history of all enforced diasporas" and leads to the restoration of an "imaginary fullness or plentitude, to set against the broken rubric of our past" (Hall, 1996: 428). Africa, he stresses, is the "name of the missing term, (...) which lies at the centre of our

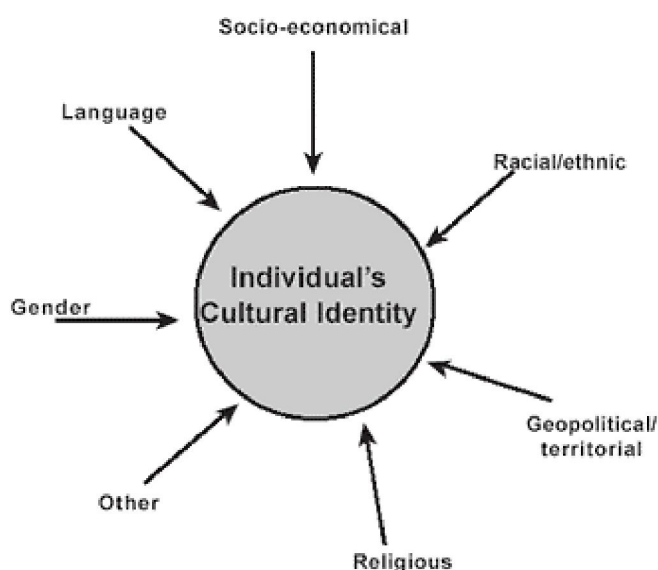


Figure 1. Individual's Cultural Identity (Sysoev, 2001)

cultural identity and gives it a meaning which, until recently, it lacked" (Hall, 1996: 432).

The second model of (cultural) identity acknowledges 'what we really are' or rather 'what we have become'. From this point of view, cultural identity is a:

"(...) matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (Hall, 1996: 394).

In offering his model of Caribbean identity, Hall suggests that the "black Caribbean identities are seen as 'framed by two axes or vectors, simultaneously operative: the vector of similarity or continuity §the first model of identity, and the vector of difference and rupture'" (Hall, 1996: 395). Using the Bakhtinian metaphor, he asserts that these two axes exist in a 'dialogic relationship'. To be precise,

"(...) the uprooting of slavery and transportation and the insertion into the plantation economy (as well as the symbolic economy) of the Western world (...) 'unified' these peoples across their differences, in the same moment as it cut them off from direct access to their past" (Hall, 1996: 396).

Within the framework of cultural identity, Hall finds Derrida's notion of 'difference' particularly useful to describe that "special and peculiar supplement which the black and mulatto skin adds to the 'refinement' and sophistication" (Hall, 1996: 397) of European

culture. Difference "challenges the fixed binaries which stabilize meaning and representation and show how meaning is never fixed or completed, but keeps on moving to encompass other, additional or supplementary meanings" (Hall, 1996: 397). The question is: where "does identity come in to this infinite postponement of meaning?" (Hall, 1996: 397). Thus, "meaning continues to unfold beyond the arbitrary closure which makes it, at any moment, possible. There is always something left over" (Hall, 1996: 396).

Drawing upon the notions of both displacement and deferral, Hall insinuates that the Caribbean is neither an isolated and autonomous place which exists in a social and historical vacuum nor is the past separable from the present. The Caribbean identity is a "'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall, 1996: 91), a symbolic journey which a Caribbean or black diaspora must discover.

The concept of identity can be defined in terms of sameness vs. difference. More particular, *difference* (in the sense of difference, according to Derrida) is always there within any apparently 'similar' identities; though temporary fixity is needed in the process of identification, "there is always something 'left over'" (Hall, 1996: 55). Within this perspective, all the three 'presences' that occur in the Caribbean identities ('islanders' to their mainland) can be viewed as such: African not by origin, but always involved; European, but internally dislocated and creolized; and American, by both hybridity and *diaspora*.

In understanding the concepts of *identity* and *assimilation*, terms such as "diaspora" and "hybridity" become other ways to analyze the nature of identity. Thus, we can see home and exile as two dynamic ends of what Byfield comments as "the creation of diaspora is in large measure contingent on a diasporic identity that links the constituent parts of the diaspora to a homeland" (Byfield, 2000: 2). However, the discourse about identity is filled with a clash between those who see a relatively fixed, coherent and racialised identity and those who

perceive identities as multiple, provisional and dynamic. This latter group (Gilroy, 1993; Hall, 1990) prefers, instead, the metaphor of hybridity to capture the ever-changing mixture of cultural characteristics. Early studies of diaspora were largely anthropological and focused on the 'survival' of cultural traits from Africa in the New World.

To a large extent this issue of displacement and authenticity sets up the background for what followed: some sustained that there was an annihilation of cultural characteristics during the middle passage and did not consider Africa as a reference point, while others considered the African culture as being a surviving one and took this as an evidence of a desire to return. These returnings are thus connected to a racialised and gendered hierarchy: "we must always keep in mind that diasporic identities are socially and historically constituted, reconstituted, and reproduced" (Patterson and Kelley, 2000: 19). The circumstances in which this takes place are highly organized within the imperial cultural configurations, but one thing which is fixed is that "the arrangements that this hierarchy assumes may vary from place to place but it remains a gendered racial hierarchy" (Patterson and Kelley, 2000: 20).

In what concerns the dynamics of identity within diaspora, during the 90's, several typologies were adopted in order to understand and to describe the diasporas. In this perspective, for Alain Medam the typology of the diasporic structure should be based on the opposition between the "crystallised diasporas" and the "fluid diasporas". From the point of view of homeland, Robin Cohen (1997) created a new typology of diaspora based on diversity, namely:

1. Labour diasporas
2. Imperial diasporas
3. The trade diasporas
4. The Cultural diasporas (the Caribbean case)

The last type of diaspora – the *cultural diaspora* – with the Caribbean case became one of the most stimulating and productive type. In its one cultural dimension, the diaspora discourse

emphasized the notion of hybridity, used by post-modernist authors to mark the evolution of new social dynamics seen as mixed cultures. One of the most important metaphoric designation of roots for diasporic hybridity is considered to be the *rhizome*, a term developed by Guattari and Deleuze. The rhizome becomes thus a useful motif because it describes root systems as being a continuous process that spread continuously in all directions, from random nodes, creating complex networks of unpredictable shape that are in constant process of growing. In this sense, the French Caribbean is a good example of the occurrence of the concept of hybridity. Edouard Glissant presents a clear reference to *rhizome* identity.

In this field, James Clifford (1994) also developed a reference to "travelling cultures" which found a substantial added value in the debate about the Black diaspora and in the work of Paul Gilroy (see the concept of the 'Black Atlantic'). In this perspective, this current was concisely expressed by Cohen in his quotation according to which: "diasporas are positioned somewhere between 'nations-states' and 'travelling cultures' in that they involve dwelling in a nation-state in a physical sense, but travelling in an astral or spiritual sense that falls outside the nation-state's space/time zone" (Cohen, 1997: 95).

As Paul Gilroy (1994) described, the nation-state is the institutional means to finish diaspora dissemination (diasporic translocation): on one side, through assimilation and, on the other side, through return. On the other hand, we are also at a converging point here because all these researches lead to the different questions about the connection between trans-nationalism and diasporas.

In Gilroy's view, the concept of diaspora is foregrounded as an antidote to what he calls "camp-thinking" (Gilroy, 2000: 84) which involves oppositional and exclusive modes of thought about people and culture that rest on basis of purity and cultural identities. In contrast with this approach, the diasporic identities are conceived as being "creolized, syncretized, hybridized and chronically impure cultural

forms" (Gilroy, 2000: 129). Notably, the diaspora concept can be "explicitly antinational" and can have "de-stabilizing and subversive effects" (Gilroy, 2000: 128). It offers "an alternative to the metaphysics of race, nation and bounded culture coded into the body, diaspora is a concept that problematizes the cultural and historical mechanics of belonging" (Gilroy, 2000: 123).

Diaspora is also "invariably promiscuous" and it challenges "to apprehend mutable forms that can redefine the idea of culture through reconciliation with movement and complex, dynamic variation" (Gilroy, 2000: 129-130).

To conclude, if we turn back to Hall's notion of diasporic identity we can see that his type of identity is one based upon difference and hybridity. It rejects old "'imperialising' and 'hegemonising' forms of 'ethnicity'" (Hall, 1996: 401). It is "defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity... *hybridity*" (Hall, 1996: 402). Therefore, the diasporic identity can often express more the experience of migrancy and settlement, of 'making' one's home than a fixation to a 'homeland' of diasporic cultures. For much of this subchapter I have suggested that a diasporic consciousness as classically conceived is opposed to the process of creolization.

## 2. TYPES OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

If multiple identities have to be conceived as a cultural pattern, according to the four primary axes that allow cultural identities to form described by David Winterstein, we can identify four types of cultural identities: *nested* or *embedded* identities (conceived as concentric circles), *'marble-cake'* or *mixed* identities (where the components are inseparable at different levels and they influence each other), *cross-cutting* or *overlapping* identities, *separate* or *exclusive* identities. The first axis is the *inclusion*, a set of attributes that an individual uses to communicate with a group; the second is the *exclusion* or the ensemble of means by which the group differentiates itself from others; the third defines itself as a *point of identification* within a

culture's value system; and the fourth axis is related to *space*, which helps to associate a cultural group with a specific territory" (Winterstein, 2003: 123). Within these four axes, the cultural norms are implied and meanings that work together to create the phenomena are known as *cultural identity*.

As Figure 2 shows, certain identities are nested or embedded within others. We will refer to identities towards the bottom as lower order identities (*marble-cake* or *mixed*) and those toward the top as higher order identities (*separate* or *exclusive* identities). Nested identities form the end of the chain to a higher order identity and the end of a lower order identity.

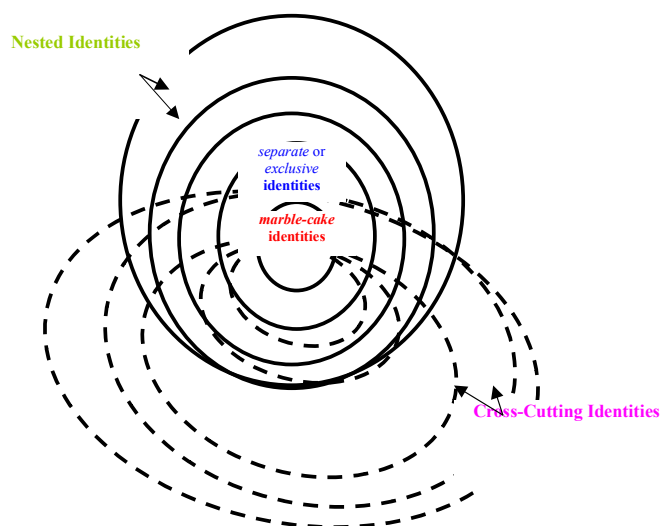


Figure 2. Nested Identities and Cross-Cutting Identities (Ashfort and Mael, 1989)

The *nested identities* (e.g. personal identities) have at least three key dimensions: inclusive/exclusive, abstract/concrete and distal/proximal. Because higher order identities are more inclusive, abstract and distal, there tends to be at least some overlap in the range of nested identities. The degree of inconsistency and conflict between nested identities may fluctuate in time as new identitarian issues arise. Ironically, such flashpoints may facilitate shifts by rendering multiple identities, although such shifts are likely to trigger heightened anxiety. A second reason that shifts between nested identities is that identification with a given level tends to generalize to other levels such that the

subjective importance of the implicated identities tends to generalize as well. Because the culture provides the context in which local identities may flourish, culture may come to be seen as one's 'home' or the 'vehicle' for expressing one's local identities. Thus, identification with a lower order entity may generalize to higher order entities. Conversely, identification with a higher order entity may predispose to perceive lower order identities in positive terms and to internalize them as more specific and localized definitions of self. Combining these two arguments, that nested identities tend to overlap and that identification tend to generalize, it seems likely that a positive correlation would exist between identification at one level and identification at other levels.

The *cross-cutting identities* (e.g. social identities) include formal and informal collectives. The larger rings depicts identities that cross-cut multiple nested identities, including identities that extend beyond the boundaries. Although the rings converge on the 'marble-cake' or embedded identities, cross-cutting identities may converge on any nested level.

### **3. INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES**

This section attempts to show that the traditional conceptions developed in order to study individual identity form a useful basis to analyse the possibilities of new postnational collective identities. At the individual level, the first approach to be taken into account is essentialism. Taking into account the collective level, according to which identity is given by social attributions, another level, the individual one arises, according to which identity is given by natural features building an identitarian essence. Another approach to individual identity is constructivism, according to which identities are created, built and rebuilt, rather than being culturally pre-ordinate. Another view to discuss is the model of narrative identity that considers the biographical structure as a condition for thinkability of collective identity.

Within the context above, the social structure

and culture contrast two notions of individual identity. In the former, identity is ascribed, inheriting in the social and family several roles the subject occupies; in the latter, identity is chosen and responsibilities are freely taken up. Deprived of structure the subject is driven into culture; denied identity fulfilled in a significant role, he or she demands an individuality which will make up for what has been relinquished. Furthermore, cultural identity is considered to be the identity of a group or culture, or of an individual as far as he or she is dependent by his/her belonging to a group or culture.

On the other hand, Mouffe states that:

"When we accept that every identity is relational and that the condition of existence of every identity is the affirmation of a difference, the determiners of an 'other' that is going to play the role of a 'constitutive outside', it is possible to understand how antagonisms arise. In the domain of collective identification, where what is in question is the creation of a 'we' by the definition of a 'them', the possibility always exists that this 'we/them' relation will turn into a relation of the friend / enemy type" (Mouffe, 1993: 2-3).

The condition for collective identification (we vs. them) - 'my blood, my family, my kin, my clan, my nation, my race' - is an ever-present and potentially violent expulsion of those who are *not* 'my blood, my family, my kin, my clan, my nation, my race'. The existing of one nation presupposes other identical nations, with the consequences that cause Hegel such anxiety and which might be phrased as: "if the other is so like me, the other is within" (Hegel, 2001: 89).

The individual, then, is an effect of multiple identifications. For example, if I was born and brought up in England I may mainly identify myself as English; but if as a child I am taken for some time to Jamaica I will have to live into that identity. Paul Gilroy writes: "I am not against the nation... I am against the rhetoric of cultural insider(ism), because I think it is too readily limited to unacceptable ideas of homogeneous national culture and exclusionary national or ethnic belonging" (Gilroy, 1994: 72). Thus, if

identity is understood as an effect of discourse, national identity in a national culture can never achieve the unified homogeneity it wishes for itself. In this case, we have to admit that there can be no escape from identity; and further that all identity defines itself precisely by establishing an inside (*in-hereness*) and an outside (*out-hereness*) so that all identity to a degrees practices insiderism together with an exclusionary force. In this case, Anthony Smith concludes that:

“Of all the collective identities in which human beings share today, national identity is perhaps the most fundamental and inclusive. Not only has nationalism, the ideological movement, penetrated every corner of the globe; the world is divided, first and foremost, into ‘nationstates’ – states claiming to be nations – and national identity everywhere underpins the recurrent drive for popular sovereignty and democracy, as well as the exclusive tyranny that it sometimes breeds. Other types of collective identity – class, gender, race, religion – may overlap or combine with national identity but they rarely succeed in undermining its hold, though they may influence its direction” (Smith, 1991: 143).

All collective identity (clan, nation, region, ethnic group) identifies its-self by denying the other, demarcates inside from outside, stretches a distance between ‘us’ and ‘them’.

In conclusion, the relationship between individual identity and collective identity, focuses on two directions of thought: one that claims that individual identity and collective identity are conflicting and that collective identity is not likely to replace the individual one; and the other that argues that collective identity is constructed on an entirely different basis than individual identity and the two can coexist. On one hand, I argued that collective identity cannot compete with individual identity because it does not have deep rooted memories that can induce a sense of loyalty the same way individual identity does. On the other hand, I emphasized that individual identity and

collective identity do not clash, because their bases for allegiance are different. Unlike individual identity which rests on a common culture to bind people, collective identity is constructed around ‘constitutional patriotism’ and individual rights and freedoms.

There are reasons to believe that both these views offer a narrow picture of the relationship between the two identities. I have argued that the formation of collective identity involves forging memories in the same way individual identity did. Because these are not fixed there is no reason to believe that these new constructs cannot become as powerful as the national ones and that, indeed, they can override national identity. Second, although collective identity is too a large degree based on principles of popular sovereignty and civic rights, it still needs a shared ‘culture’ to connect people at an emotional level. Finally, I have argued that although both collective identity and individual identity are created following similar patterns they do not necessarily clash. It is nationalism rather than national identity that could hinder the development of a collective identity.

### **3.1. NATIONAL IDENTITY**

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Nation is a form of collective identity which becomes possible only in the conditions of *modernity*. Hence, national identity is an ‘object’ of modernity. It is widely known that nation is a form of social philosophy, a way of thinking focused on promoting the interests of a particular social group<sup>2</sup>. However, Anderson is right to emphasize that nation, like the rest of human culture, is ‘imagined’ in the sense that it is constructed rather than the result of a natural process:

“I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson, 1991: 5-6).

Anderson’s work refers to anthropological data, as he maintains that the concept of “nation” is truly a cultural construct, a man-made artifice. Thus, for Anderson, it is “imagined”. Nation and identity, begin with one’s family and closest

friends, and slowly move out from this center. In our contemporary example, two residents of the same country may live in completely different geographical climates, having very little in common with each other.

Raymond Williams also comments that:

'Nation' as a term is radically connected with 'native'. We are *born* into relationships which are typically settled in a place. This form of primary and 'placeable' bonding is of quite fundamental human and natural importance. Yet the jump from that to anything like the modern nation-state is entirely artificial" (Williams, 1983: 180).

Lacan works out the implications of the view that the imaginary and the symbolic turn on each other – *identity* and *difference*, *self* and *Other*, are equally inescapable and inseparable. In the 'Mirror Stage' the identity of the individual is constituted by being borrowed from the Other. Subsequently, by repeating this internalisation of an idealised reflection of itself the subject aspires to a homogeneity and permanence which will make good its lack, identifying its unity in an image of the body as a unified whole and fearing a corresponding image of the body in pieces. The individual, then, is an effect of multiple identifications.

Nation is almost certain to be more heterogeneous in its membership than a pre-national grouping, more mixed by race, class, gender, regional loyalty. At the same time, it is composed of two separate aspects, a modern state and a culture. It occupies a "symbolic rather than territorial space" (Samuel, 1989:16). In this sense, national cultures provide discursive narratives.

In *National Identity* (1991), Anthony Smith explains the concept of *national identity* by setting forth five essential characteristics: a historic territory or 'homeland' which becomes "a repository of historic memories" (e.g. Caribbean homeland), "common myths and historical memories," a "common, mass public culture," "common legal rights and duties for all members," and a "common economy with territorial mobility for members" (Smith, 1991: 14).

The issue of identity is, therefore, particularly

focused in the Caribbean. For the displaced Africans, slavery meant "a negation of their cultural and ethnic identities" (Lent, 1990: 35) resulting in a 'white skin, black mask' schizoid identity. Besides this, the myths and symbols of national cultural identity were imposed by a colonial order and caused the conquest of European civilization, on the one hand, and the negation of the myths and symbols associated with the popular culture and resistance to a system of oppression on the other.

For the majority of islands in the Caribbean region, the issue of identity is predominantly linked to African ethnicity and heritage as people of African descent form the majority. In Trinidad, however, defining a national cultural identity is complicated by the presence of a significant East Indian population. In Dominica, there is a minority Carib population, known as the most indigenous people of this part of the Caribbean. The European whites have long since departed and are relatively insignificant in the contemporary demographics of the Caribbean. In short, the national cultural identity is largely a hybrid of European, African, Amerindian and Asian cultures, in other words, essentially creole.

Therefore, the struggle for cultural identity involves struggling for the hegemony of the popular creole culture over a culture associated with European traditions and the recuperation of myths and symbols largely suppressed by the local elites. Culture is taken here in both the narrow sense of creative expression and its wider anthropological meaning, the way of life of a distinct population. In Dominica and St. Lucia, the French had significantly influenced the creolization process before becoming permanent British colonies; hence, the popular cultural identity is very much linked to French creole language and cultural traditions. Popular culture and cultural identity in the Caribbean is thus very much grounded on race and social class.

On this basis, to conclude, it becomes possible to say that, on the one hand, "nationalism... is an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining the autonomy, unity and identity of a nation" (Smith, 1991: 74); on the other, there is



a national credo against a colonial power; "nationalism is a reaction of peoples who feel culturally at a disadvantage" (Plamenatz, qtd. in Kamenka, 1976: 24). In both cases, European and colonial nationalism, "some form of national culture pre-existed the state" (Hobsbawm, 1992: 10) is a drive to bring nation and culture into alignment.

### 3.2. TRAVELLING IDENTITIES

Culture in itself is not static, it is very fluid. Culture evolves, adapts and adopts. In this sense, *travelling identities* are part of an initiation step. The journey is an apparently linear and fixed path, while wandering / adventure has some unforeseen and sinuous implications. However, the apparent purpose of an imposing a trip overlaps the apparent lack of purpose that characterizes the adventures. As Baudelaire asserts, "The real travelers are those who leave to go!"

Within the oscillation between *negritude* and *negriceness*, the African-descendent experiences become the symbol of mobility. Involved in such a kind of moveable identity, "§...‡ the subject develops different identities in specific moments. These identities are not unified around a coherent 'self'" (Hall, 1992: 13). This mobility which features the African-descendent identities is sustained by the *double consciousness* of the existential experience that instigates the black subject to move within the westernized world. Du Bois explains that when he lives the *double consciousness*, the black subject "feels his two-ness - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (DuBois, 1994: 2), thus creating a so-called 'hyphenated' cultural identity. For Edouard Glissant, such a feeling of duality prepares the white subject for some new aspects of *Creoleness*, an experience that makes the composite identity possible, thus giving room for the kind of "rhizome-like identity, an identity not like a single root identity §Negriceness, or Negritude‡, but one like a root moving towards the encounter with other roots (Negriticeness)"

(Glissant, 2005: 27).

The concept of *négritude* refers to those traveling identities and cultures, coming from Africa, going to the Caribbean, and then advancing to Europe. In such an experience of leaving from one place to reach another, the ship turns itself into the metaphor of displacement, being able to develop a 'traveling alterity'. Within the metaphor of navigation and dislocation that the ship represents, intercultural and identity losses and gains are associated with the concept of *the middle passage*. On the one hand, Glissant links the ship and the middle passage with the African-descendents' losses, arguing that:

"Because the womb of the slave-ship is the place and the moment, in which the African languages disappear, as they never put together in a slave-ship, nor in the plantations, people who could speak the same language. Thus, the persons found themselves dispossessed of all kind of elements of their daily life" (Glissant, 2005: 19).

While 'crossing' *the middle passage*, the traveler's culture moves itself, displaces itself, loses itself in, resists to, and mixes with, the receptive culture. Clifford argues that a "culture travels through specific histories of population movement, exile, and labor migration" (Clifford, 1997: 27). Travelling culture becomes diasporic culture, which for Clifford, results from "the ways people leave home and return, enacting differently centered worlds, interconnected cosmopolitanisms" (Clifford, 1997: 27-28). This consideration brings the concept of *signifyin(g)* which implies the idea of traveling and navigating cultures; influenced by cultural mobility, *signifyin(g)* intends to account for intertextuality in African-descendents' experiences. In the African-descendent literary scenario, *signifyin(g)* explains "how black texts 'talk' to other black texts" (Gates, 1988: xxvi).

Hall argues that we should not "look at national (transnational) cultures as something unified" by some values to which we are obliged to submit. On the contrary, he suggests that nations/transnations "are crossed by profound internal divisions and difference". He also

suggests that “we should think of the (national/transnational) cultures as a discursive production representing the difference as unity or identity” (Hall, 1996: 61-62). Glissant is of the same opinion when he suggests that the identity is open and develops a double root, which, according to him is the identity that comes from creoleness, “that is, from the rizome-like identity, from the identity no longer as one solitary root, but as a root moving toward and encountering other roots” (Glissant, 2005: 27).

However, in thinking about travel, the identitarian questions that arise are: What becomes the sense of home? Is home merely a place to depart from, or can we see travel as leading us to think about how homes must also be cultivated through movement? James Clifford argues that “Cultural centers, discrete regions and territories, do not exist prior to contacts, but are sustained through them, appropriating and disciplining the restless movements of people and things” (Clifford, 1997: 3). This loss of the traveler’s identity, according to Leed, “brings a gain of stature and certainty of self”. The traveler, “reduced to its essentials”, engages in a self-reflective activity, which allows “one to see what those essentials are” (Leed, 2001: 6).

Home is not a place that one leaves behind, but a geographical point of reference, a sense of place which serves as an anchor for the travel. According to James Clifford, the cross-cultural or ‘border’ experiences of travel should not be viewed as acculturation, where there is a linear progression from culture A to culture B, nor as syncretism, where two systems overlap each other. Rather, Clifford understands these cross-cultural or ‘border’ experiences as instances of historical contact, “with entanglement at intersecting regional, national, and transnational levels” (Clifford, 1997: 7). Inspired by Mary Louise Pratt’s ‘contact-zones’, a contact approach emphasizes the intercultural interaction that takes place within these spaces of interaction and exchange.

In his study on rites of passage, Arnold van Gennep identifies three stages at work in transitional events such as births, marriages, and deaths: *separation* (the preliminal stage),

*transition* (the liminal stage), and *incorporation* (the postliminal stage). While the passage itself involves an ambiguous threshold, the completion of a rite of passage establishes the individual’s identity within a new social category or phase of life. It is entirely fitting that Antoinette (*Wide Sargasso Sea*), who spends so much of the novel rejecting carefully constrained categories in order to inhabit conceptually blended spaces, would, at the end of the novel, steal a set of keys and break from the contained space of a bedroom into a passageway – a dark passageway – because it is a mysterious space that fulfills her earlier yearning for “shifting shadows” (WSS, 48). Importantly, though, this passage has no destination. The candle is present, Antoinette says, “to light me along the dark passage” (WSS, 156), but here the novel ends, without her being led anywhere. She remains caught in a space that ought to connect two particular states, but is itself neither here nor there. The perpetual liminality of a failed rite of passage mirrors the dissolution of discrete concepts by which metaphor verges on madness; while successful liminal transition can be read as a metaphor for metaphor itself, entrapment within a liminal space is a metaphor for madness. If the inability to recognize the boundaries of the metaphorical space is the inability to maintain sanity by grounding experience in discrete concepts, then the breakages of Antoinette’s associative context leave her caught within the space of metaphor, where ‘this’ can no longer be distinguished from ‘that’.

This dark passage of the liminal space also echoes the middle passage of the slave ships, whose captive human cargo benefited Antoinette’s family for years before slavery was abolished. Dionne Brand, a member of the African-Caribbean diaspora, describes the diasporic experience as one of feeling disconnected from the lands on both sides of the ocean: “There is the sense in the mind of not being here or there, of no way out or in. §...§ Caught between the two we live in the Diaspora, in the sea in between. Imagining our ancestors stepping through these portals one senses people stepping out into nothing; one senses a surreal space, an inexplicable space. One imagines

people so stunned by their circumstances, so heartbroken as to refuse reality. Our inheritance in the Diaspora is to live in this inexplicable space" (Brand, 2002: 20). *Wide Sargasso Sea*, like metaphor, is a dark passage of shifting shadows that is useful to cross, but which, in the face of violent disconnections such as those that Antoinette experiences, can become its own desolate destination: "We are always in the middle of the journey" (Brand, 2002: 49).

## 4. HYBRIDITY

### 4.1. THE RHETORIC OF HYBRIDITY

In this subchapter, I argue that the rhetoric of hybridity associated with the Caribbean identity, and broadly speaking in particular with its "creolization" counterpart, apply as compulsory a new framework that continues to mark Caribbean identity as an 'exotic' other. Transgression concepts<sup>3</sup> can be applied to serve various interests just as it is the case with the idea of purity. Hence, we should always be attentive to the question of whose interests are served by articulating identity in terms of 'hybridity', rather than 'purity' in specific instances. In this sense, hybridity will be used to help focus our understanding of these diverse concepts which are against purity, focusing on the experience of the migrant/exiled as a particularly displacement experience of their position 'on the margin' or 'inbetween' cultures, of dislocations and relocations. In the words of Stuart Hall: "You have to be familiar enough with it to know how to move in it. But you have to be sufficiently outside it, so you can examine it and critically interrogate it. And it is this double move or, what I think one writer after another have called, the double consciousness of the exile, of the migrant, of the stranger who moves to another place, who has this double way of seeing it, from the inside and the outside" (Hall, 1996: 381).

Following W. E. B. DuBois's conception, the diasporic 'double consciousness' indicates a split psychic space where the marginalized people are able to resist and re-appropriate the hegemonic

forces. Just as cultural hybridization is not considered to be a 'free' oscillation between or among chosen identities, the 'doubling' of one's consciousness cannot be 'free' from the critical awareness of one's vulnerability. Hence, the formation of double consciousness is not simply a cognitive process of constructing self-knowledge or self-identity. Rather, DuBois's conception of 'double consciousness' embraces a human reflexivity (a volitional human activity) that questions self as a supreme being. In short, the formation of double consciousness is a nexus of interconnected processes of generating and re-generating dialogical human relationships.

We should call the attention to the fact that speaking of 'mixture' presupposes the existence of something that can be mixed. A counterargument to this could be that hybridity is not about mixture *in nuce*, since purity never existed; rather, hybridity is about displacement. That is, focusing on hybridity involves focusing on Hall's concept of 'positioning', rather than on 'mixing' of cultural forms. It involves focusing on the relation between the 'centre' and the 'margin' in one way or the other, be it the relation between the West and the rest or between majority and minority or on how the penetration of the centre by the marginalized undermines the dominant position of the centre.

Within this framework, hybridity represented an important part of this new pattern, sustaining that assertions of identity and difference are celebrated in either the nostalgic form of "traditional survivals" or mixed in a "new world of hybrid forms" (Clifford, 2000: 103), an opposition which will become central to our critique of the terms. Besides the outlining positions set out above, hybridity evokes the formation of identity, being considered a cultural code for *translation*. In Bhabha's terms "hybridity is camouflage." (Bhabha, 1994: 193)

On one hand, in relation to diaspora, hybridity is perceived as a process of cultural mixing where the diasporic subjects change different aspects of the host culture and reconfigure them under the 'shape' of a new hybrid culture or "hybrid identities" (Chambers, 1996: 50). On the other hand, "hybrid identities"

also imply the existence of non-hybridity:

“(…) the idea of hybridity, of intermixture, presupposes two anterior purities... I think there isn't any purity; there isn't any anterior purity... that's why I try not to use the word hybrid ... Cultural production is not like mixing cocktails” (Gilroy, 1994: 54-55).

In other words, the language of contemporary cultural theory shows remarkable similarities with the patterns of thought which characterised Victorian racial theory. It is very important to signal the fact that the 'culture clash' associated with the idea of cultural survival through fusion, mixture, miscegenation or creolization provoked a clash in the colonial rule, attempting to unravel the violent consequences of a paranoid 'first contact'.

The driving imperative is to save centred, bounded and coherent identities: placed identities for placeless times. Purified identities are constructed through the purification of space, through the maintenance of the territorial boundaries and frontiers, being also situated at the heart of empire. This can be understood in terms of “a geography of rejection which appears to correspond to the purity of antagonistic communities” (Sibley, 1995: 410). Purification aims to secure both protection from and positional superiority over, the external Other. In this case, William Connolly argues:

“When you remain within the established field of identity and difference, you become a bearer of strategies to protect identity through devaluation of the other; but if you transcend the field of identities through which the other is constituted, you lose the identity and standing needed to communicate with those you sought to inform. Identity and difference are bound together. It is impossible to reconstitute the relation to the second without confounding the experience of the first” (Connolly, 1991: 329).

Jennifer DeVere Brody suggests that “purity is impossible and, in fact, every mention of the related term hybrid, only confirms a strategic taxonomy that constructs purity as a prior (fictive) ground” (DeVere Brody, 1998: 11-12).

Stuart Hall is of the opinion that “unsettling,

recombination, hybridisation and 'cut-and-mix' carries with a transformed relation to Tradition”, one in which “there can be no simple 'return' stop or 'recovery' of the ancestral past which is not re-experienced through the categories of the present” (Hall, 1996: 30). This crossing of boundaries makes us “to see others not as ontologically given but as historically constituted” and, thus, to “erode the exclusivist biases we so often ascribe to cultures, our own not least” (Said, 1994: 225). Thus, the colonial discourse acts as a bearer of identity. In constructing identity, Paul Ricoeur suggests that:

“When we discover that there are several cultures instead of just one and consequently at the time when we acknowledge the end of a sort of cultural monopoly, be it illusory or real, we are threatened with the destruction of our discovery. Suddenly, it becomes possible that there are just others, that we are ourselves an 'other' among others” (Ricoeur, 1965: 278).

To conclude, the wish to replace 'purity talk' with 'hybridity talk' also has very different power effects, depending on the context and who defines the situation.

#### 4.2. THE 'THIRD SPACE' OF HYBRIDITY

In this section, I suggest a way of looking at postcolonial identity as fluid, relational and always in flux. I explain this fluidity of identity by making a reference to Homi Bhabha's innovative formulation and application of the concept of liminality in his text, *The Location of Culture*. This is important because, the vocabulary of liminality inclines toward fluidity and allows particular spaces of meaning to emerge. Therefore, Bhabha is also involved in what Stuart Hall calls “thinking at or beyond the limit” (Hall, 1996: 259), a thinking on the margins.

According to Homi Bhabha, hybridity is a new cultural and a privileged third space. This third space of the *cultural hybridity* raises the questions for notions of cultural authenticity. Authenticity and hybridity are not opposites, but are natural extensions of each other, the latter producing new forms of authenticity. In *The*

*Location of Culture* (1994), Homi Bhabha analyses the liminality of hybridity as a paradigm of colonial anxiety. He uses liminality, like hybridity, to refer to the moment or place, where a thing becomes its alterity. His key argument is that colonial hybridity, as a cultural form, produces ambivalence in the colonial masters and as such it alters the authority of power. Opposing the notion of colonial power as a textual construct, David Theo Goldberg warns that hybridity should not automatically be read as a sign of the inherent instability of colonial authority, arguing that “the traces of uncertainty which are discernable in some colonial writing should be read as a troubled response to the colonial condition, but not as attesting to the fragility of imperial rule” (Goldberg, 2001: 76).

Thus, the third space is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a *productive*, and not merely reflective, space that engenders new forms of cultural meaning and production blurring the limitations of existing boundaries and calling into question established categorizations of culture and identity:

“For me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the ‘Third Space’, which enables other positions to emerge” (Rutherford, 1990: 211).

It is an “interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative” (Bhabha, 1994: 103) space. Bhabha’s critique of cultural imperialist hybridity means that the rhetoric of hybridity became more concerned with challenging essentialism and has been applied to sociological theories of identity, multiculturalism, and racism. There is also a nostalgic attempt to revivify pure and indigenous regional cultures in reaction against what are perceived as threatening forms of cultural hybridity. Moreover, Bhabha stresses the interdependence of coloniser and colonized, in terms of hybridity. In accepting this argument, we begin to understand why claims to the inherent purity and originality of cultures are urging the colonial subjects into this ‘third space’ in an effort to open up the notion of an international culture “not based on exoticism or multi-culturalism of the diversity of cultures, but

on the inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity” (Bhabha, 1994: 109).

The *hybrid identity* is positioned within this third space, as “lubricant” (Papastergiadis, 1997: 56) in the conjunction of cultures. The hybrid’s potential is with their innate knowledge of ‘transculturation’, their ability to transverse both cultures and to translate, negotiate and mediate affinity and difference within a dynamic of exchange and inclusion. They have encoded within them a counter hegemonic agency. At the point at which the coloniser presents a normalizing, hegemonic practice, the hybrid strategy opens up a third space of/for rearticulating negotiation and meaning.

One of the most disputed terms in postcolonial studies, ‘hybridity’ commonly refers to “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization” (Ashcroft, 2003: 118). Hybridization displays many forms including cultural, political and linguistic ones. Moreover, Ashcroft sustains how “hybridity and the power it releases may well be seen as the characteristic feature and contribution of the post-colonial, allowing a means of evading the replication of the binary categories of the past and developing new anti-monolithic models of cultural exchange and growth” (Ashcroft, 1995: 183).

On the contrary, Papastergiadis reminds us of the emancipative potential of negative terms. He poses the following question: “should we use only words with a pure and inoffensive history, or should we challenge essentialist models of identity by taking on and then subverting their own vocabulary?” (Papastergiadis, 1997: 258). This question transforms the concept of hybridity into a “celebrated and privileged kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-betweenness, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference” (Hoogvelt, 1997: 158).

### **4.3. PATTERNS OF HYBRIDITY**

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#### **4.3.1. Diasporic Hybridity**

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The creative production of *diasporic hybridity* takes the form of a delicate double-matter: denial

and appropriation as such in the name of a perennial 'homelessness' and at the same time engaging in the polemical politics of representation. Characterized by a symptomatic DuBoisian 'double consciousness', the diasporic hybridity has to both 'enjoy itself as symptom' and simultaneously transform the political body where it resides as 'symptom'. The concept of diasporic hybridity reveals a dynamic construction which creates cultural mixing in the context of colonialism (Brah, 1996; Hall, 1996; Gilroy, 2000).

At another level, the view of diasporic hybridity as *layered* in history includes the pre-colonial, colonial/imperial and postcolonial post-imperial periods, each with distinct sets of hybridity, as a function of the boundaries that were prominent (see Figure 3). Population movements, cross-cultural trade, intercultural contact and intermarriage have been common throughout history. Superimposed upon the deep strata of mixing in evolutionary time are historical episodes of long-distance cross-cultural trade, conquest and empire, and specific episodes such as trans-Atlantic slavery and the triangular trade.

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

- Hybridity *across modes of production* (this gives rise to mixed social formations);
- Hybridity *before and after industrialization*;
- Hybrid *modes of regulation* (besides nations

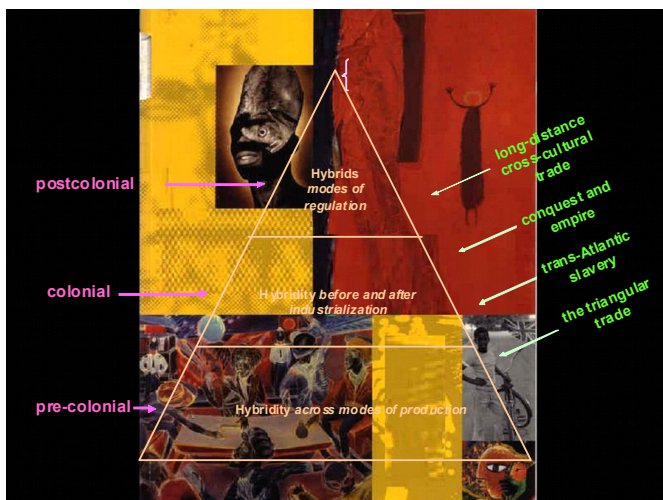


Figure 3. Patterns of Hybridity as layered in History

with overtly hybrid identities, there are hybrid regions or zones that straddle geographic and cultural areas).

#### 4.3.2. 'Organic' versus 'Intentional' Hybridity

Robert Young distinguishes between 'organic' and 'intentional' (Young, 1995: 24-25) modes of hybridity (see figure 4). We are thus facing a dualism in hybridity theory between the positive hybridity, which is dynamic, progressive, diasporic, rhizomic, subversive, anti-essentialist, routes-oriented and based on cut-and-mix; and a negative hybridity, which is essentialist, roots-oriented and based on simple ideas of combining two wholes to make a third whole.

These two schemes are both characterized by the dynamic processes of cultural practice which display their own tensions between roots and routes, being and becoming.

Many critics (such as Hall, Bhabha and Spivak) consider that hybridity could have possible positive effects in different cultural contexts. In this respect, Papastergiadis notes that: "At the broadest level of conceptual debate there seems to be a consensus over the utility of hybridity as antidote to essentialist subjectivity" (Papastergiadis, 1997: 273). Moving on Bakhtin and Hall, Robert Young introduces a type of hybridization that is 'organic' (Bakhtin's term) and that it merges different identities into new forms. He goes on to describe a second more radical form of hybridization that is 'intentional' and diasporic, "intervening as a form of subversion, translation, transformation" (Young, 1995: 25). He argues that: "Hybridization as creolization involves fusion, the creation of a new form, which can then be set against the old form, of which it is partly made up. Hybridization as 'raceless chaos' by contrast, produces no stable new form but rather something closer to Bhabha's restless, uneasy, interstitial hybridity: a radical heterogeneity, discontinuity, the permanent revolution of forms" (Young, 1995: 25).

The two diasporic forms of hybridity (the first one being identified by Young with the process of 'homogenization') are opposing each other:

“hybridity has not slipped out of the mantle of the past” and has not yet been “fully redeployed and reinflected” by cultural theorists (Young, 1995: 24-25). Young points that these two forms of hybridity are in an historical relation of chronological change, in which a newer, more positive form is being balanced by the older, anachronistic, negative form. In this dynamic context, the effect is that these types of hybridity “constantly overlap and interweave” (Young, 1995: 24) being framed by the same historical background.

In his fundamental distinction between ‘organic’ and ‘intentional’ hybridity, Bakhtin refers to ‘organic hybridity’ as: “unintentional, unconscious hybridization (...), as one of the most important modes in the historical life and evolution of languages. We may even say that language and languages change historically primarily by means of hybridization, by means of mixing of various ‘languages’” (Bakhtin, 1981: 358). He goes on to expose that: “the mixture remains mute and opaque, never making use of conscious contrasts and oppositions... şYetş such unconscious hybrids have been at the same time profoundly productive historically: they are pregnant with potential for new world views, with new ‘internal forms’ for perceiving the world” (Bakhtin, 1981: 360).

According to Bakhtin, “an intentional hybrid is first of all a *conscious* hybrid” (Bakhtin, 1981: 359), that is, “an encounter within the area of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousness, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor” (Bakhtin, 1981: 358) (see also Figure 4).

Similarly Bhabha drawing on Derrida, also stresses the performative dimensions of cultural enunciation: “*the place of utterance* is crossed by the difference of writing... (which ensures) that meaning is never simply mimetic and transparent” (Bhabha, 1994: 36). Thus, the ceremonial opening of the bridge defines a liminal space in which both intentional and organic hybridities, conscious and unconscious, are played out. Seen from Bhabha’s perspective, both types of hybridity (he does not distinguish them) frame the already mentioned ‘third space’

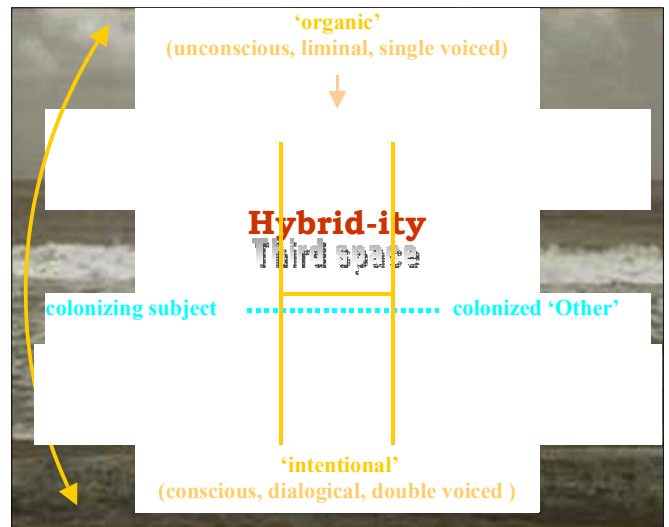


Figure 4. Organic versus Intentional Hybridity

in which the ambivalences of the colonial encounter are enacted.

#### 4.4. HYBRIDITY VERSUS CULTURAL ALTERITY

In the Western thought, the ‘other’ was seen as a threat, alter-ego or an enigma of the self. The definition offered by *Oxford English Dictionary* describes alterity as: “The state of being other or different; diversity, ‘otherness’” (OED, 78). At the other pole one could find such terms as *mimesis* or *copy*. *Cultural alterity* is a pattern of perceiving those outside a group, whatever that group might be, as inferior to another group. Those who do not fit, who are not really included, are considered as forming the Other. In other words, all groups have a tendency to develop some expectations, and that some people who do not meet those expectations become Other. In addition to that, whenever an In-group is defined, an Out-group is automatically created (e.g. those who are not included). W.E.B. Du Bois talks about the pain of such exclusion on the basis of his racial identification and ‘double consciousness’. Thus, the need for “belongingness” can lead to the belief that if we can come to a consensus amongst ourselves, then we have achieved something valuable as a social group. This agreement then becomes normal and the expectations tend to be based on it. When these expectations are not met,

we consider the others who do not meet them "deviant", or not like us, namely the *Other*.

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

When the self refers to the individual, one must wonder to what extent a person can actually know one's own mind. Thus, the identity of the individual is constituted by being borrowed from the Other. In this way, the unconscious provides an example of an-other in the tension between the subject and the ego.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon gives an account of the colonial environment inherently engendering inferiority complexes for the colonized because "the black is a black man; that is as the result of a series of aberrations of affect, he is rooted at the core of a universe from which he must be extricated" (Fanon, 1967: 183). Fanon describes his mission in his book to be "the liberation of the man of colour from himself" because as a result of the prejudice and stereotyping arising from the cultural differences, the excluded seeks and desires to prove his humanity, his sameness, to the included and find solidarity with the white man. In our case, the other as a screen emphasizes that the power disparities can change the other into a blank screen. The process of negotiating Caribbean identities involves the question of defining the people. Fanon speaks of what he calls "a passionate research directed to the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today,

beyond self-contempt, resignation and abjuration, some beautiful and splendid area whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and others" (Fanon, 1967: 67).

## CONCLUSIONS

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

In this respect, the paper also focuses on a critique of postcolonial/cultural studies using the matrix of the modern/colonial world, as a response to the Other's dilemma. The idea that the postcolonial culture is a hybrid one derives straight from the notion of de-territorialization, suggesting that the disappearance of the relationship between culture and place is doubled by the mixture of the uprooted cultural identities. This type of critique is found on the borders, in the overlaps, and the in-between places, between two or more cultures. No cultural identity is produced out of thin air. It is produced out of those historical experiences, those cultural traditions, those lost and marginal languages, those marginalized experiences,



those peoples and histories that remain unwritten. Those are the specific roots of identity; identity is not in the past to be found, but in the future to be constructed.

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

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

Moreover, the paper explores the ambivalent, uncertain questions of the hybrid colonial desire. We can think of a correspondence between the *mise-en-scène* of unconscious fantasy, the racist fear (the language of colonial racism) and the hate that stalk the colonial scene, seen as a depersonalization of the colonial man. It is this flash of ‘recognition’ – in its Hegelian sense with its transcendental spirit – that inflames the colonial relation between. In disavowing the culturally differentiated condition of the colonial world, the colonizer is himself caught in the ambivalence of paranoid identification. The

white man does not deny what he fears and desires by projecting it on ‘them’. By following the trajectory of colonial desire in the company of the colonial figure, it becomes possible to cross, even to shift the Manichean boundaries of colonial consciousness. But the strategic return of that difference that informs and deforms the image of identity, in the margin of Otherness, displays identification between hybridity and cultural alterity. The disavowal of the Other always exacerbates the ‘edge’ of identification and reveals that dangerous place where hybridity and cultural alterity are twinned.

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### Endnotes

1. Diaspora (namely a collective memory and myth about the homeland) refers to those social groups which share a common ethnic and national origin, but live outside the territory of origin. These groups have a strong feeling of attachment to their "homeland", making no specific reference to ethnicity, or to a particular place of settlement. All diasporas, either independent of national and ethnic background or treated as a single group in which ethnical boundaries are crossed are considered as being hybrid and globally oriented.
2. See Breuilly's statement: "To focus upon culture, ideology, identity, class or modernization is to neglect the fundamental point that nationalism is, above and beyond else, about politics and that politics is about power" (Breuilly, 1993: 1).
3. It is to be mentioned that culture works according to the following functions: one is Homi Bhabha's 'fixed tablet of tradition' and the second is a location for the development of culture (referring to the process of cultural change and hybridization). In this respect, one way to distinguish between these two cultural forces is that the former is not geographically dependent, whereas hybridisation is often specifically related to a place, locale or situation.