

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: HYBRIDITY IN
CONTEMPORARY POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

EXAMINING AGENCY

This book represents an attempt to align more closely the notion of hybridity in postcolonial studies with the exigencies that led to the founding of this academic discipline itself. Such exigencies arose from recognizing and studying situations of stark inequalities, which were held in place and legitimated by the various machinations of, or inherited from, colonialism. That is, in unpacking and examining hybridity today in some of its theoretical versions as well as specific societal configurations, this book attends to the ways in which such inequalities might inform current derivatives of hybridity.

Hybridity is an enticing idea in current postcolonial studies.¹ In its dominant form, it is claimed that it can provide a way out of binary thinking, allow the inscription of the agency of the subaltern, and even permit a restructuring and destabilizing of power. These assertions need to be tested and this is precisely what I propose to do in this book. This book evaluates central claims regarding agency in postcolonial theories of hybridity and investigates the avatars of hybridity to be found in the realities of the Indian Ocean “Creole” islands of La Réunion, which remains a French department, and Mauritius, independent from Britain since 1968.

In theoretical discourse, hybridity has spawned a variegated vocabulary, including terms such as diaspora, métissage, creolization, transculturation. Although skeptical about the validity of an exuberant type of hybridity that, it is claimed, poses an effective challenge to oppressive forces of the increasingly

globalized world, I am interested in exploring what, if any, beneficent hybridity holds for a radical conception of agency. The term “radical” means quite simply here that agency, in this conception, must be tied to social change in which some inequality or injustice is addressed. I therefore think it important to provisionally, but clearly, distinguish between hybridity as a theoretical concept and a political stance that we can argue, and hybridity as a social reality with historical specificity. The collusion of these two domains (of theory/politics and social reality) with regard to the hybrid will become significant to the analyses that follow. For me, the most productive theories of hybridity are those that effectively balance the task of inscribing a functional-instrumental version of the relation between culture and society with that of enabling the more utopian/collective image of society. Privileging what is hybrid in today’s world cannot, even parenthetically, leave out the moment of capitalism in which such a view is offered—a moment that invites and, indeed, celebrates the hybrid through heterogeneity, multiplicity, and difference. On this view, a critical stance toward capitalism introduces skepticism into the idea that agency of the subaltern is thriving. The critique of capitalism comes from recognizing the unequal access to enabling processes, positions, and different kinds of capital for larger portions of the world’s population.

POLITICS OF HYBRIDITY

I wish to suggest, at the outset, some simple reconsiderations to demonstrate the importance of a more careful attention to the varied vocabulary that is employed in referring to hybridity in contemporary theory. Throughout this book I will work between vocabularies generated in the relationship of Francophone studies to the more general field of (anglophone) postcolonial studies. Part of the reasoning for this is purely circumstantial in that my training has been in French and Francophone literature and culture and French theories of culture especially as they relate to postcolonial studies. Also, the rapid movement of French theory into postcolonial studies has occurred in various ways, not insignificantly and apart from the many translations, through more and more theorists who are conversant in these two idioms and who activate these channels.

It is my contention that there has been, in the proliferation of recent and disparate work on hybridity, a rather loose set of related terms that have not been problematized. It is no longer clear what is being suggested when referring to processes that are understood to be hybridizing. Some terms one frequently encounters are, for example: diaspora, *créolité*, creolization, intercultural interaction, transculturation, *métissage*, or syncretism. I am not undertaking the task

of sorting through each and every one of these terms.² Rather, I wish to demonstrate by way of a brief investigation, the comparatively different politics that specific versions of hybridity can presuppose and engender. Therefore, it follows that it is important to be able to identify what politics are implicated by the use of a specific term born within a particular theory, especially if a different term carries with it an opposing signification. We should then reconsider using them interchangeably as is often the case.

I show the significance of such a gesture by investigating two avatars of hybridity under the provisional terminology of “diaspora” and “creolization” (or postdiaspora hybridity).³ My choice of these two terms for the following discussion is based on my reading of them as incarnating two salient and opposed types of politics in the discourse of hybridity.

We can begin by deliberately separating these two terms for analytical purposes even while considering the arguable usefulness of keeping them distinct. Of course, the difficulty of doing this does not just follow from the fact that these terms are linked conceptually in fundamental ways and that they perhaps even share common meanings—or at least connotations—but also because they are entangled with a host of other terms such as those mentioned above. Still, the merit of the following exercise will become evident: it is to demonstrate first that in contemporary discourses of theoretical hybridity, there are some shared politics that differ from those of a prior moment, which I shall specify; also, while contemporary derivatives of hybridity seem to ally quite easily with a version of Marxism in promoting the agency of subaltern subjects, they are actually antagonistic to some basic Marxian notions, which are central to a conception of agency.

Diaspora as an enterprise obviously has deeply political foundations. Speaking of the African diaspora, we could agree that it became a project in response to racist ideologies developed in tandem with colonial exploitation in essentialist and biological terms. In this context, the idea of the African diaspora might be said to really take root at a particular historical moment: that of Pan-Africanism of the nations of the African continent as well as of pan-Africanism as the connection of all peoples of African descent, who were disadvantaged due to white supremacy, colonialism, slavery, and forced migration. Diasporic discourses, inasmuch as we are able to identify them today, tend to continue to function in the same mode of solidarity as they grapple with negative representations (and their very real consequences) of peoples seen as African in origin, in considering this diaspora.⁴

However, positing the idea of an African diaspora in this manner has been questioned because of a certain fixedness that it imposes, consequentially aggravating the pigeonholing, in particular ways, of “Africans” in different

national and transnational contexts. The bases for solidarity within emancipatory movements also proved to be skewed toward a particular male subjectivity.⁵ Creolization, then, as a theoretical stratagem was seen to release notions of diaspora from this essentialist one. Stuart Hall explains the new vision of diaspora, which I qualify here for clarity as creolization, implicitly opposing it to the previous one: “[. . .] diaspora does not refer us to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all cost return, even if it means pushing other people into the sea” (“Cultural Identity and Diaspora” 401). The most evident example of the creolization versus diaspora dialogue in the Francophone context came with the publication of Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant’s *Eloge de la Créolité*, which took a quite specifically antagonistic stance toward négritude, and Aimé Césaire in particular, despite problems within their own theory and the homage paid to Césaire himself in this manifesto.⁶ Creolization, when viewed as a theoretical formulation postdiaspora, is tuned in to the present of diasporic populations away from the homeland. It addresses their concerns about advancement without blind assimilation but rather by preserving difference, allying around particular causes, connecting with the motherland in a way that is practical and practicable, and connecting with other diasporics. Hall explicitly places himself as theorizing about this second moment, when he explains that “[t]here are at least two different ways of thinking about ‘cultural identity’” (“Cultural Identity and Diaspora” 393). The first posits a oneness and shared culture, while the “second position recognises that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant difference . . .” (“Cultural Identity and Diaspora” 394).

Viewed in this diachronic manner, we can identify in theoretical and political discourses dealing with the idea of minority constituencies, various changes that transform diaspora into creolization. This has to do with diaspora discourse having to encounter and accommodate itself to other experiences of minority status or new immigrations. It has to do with different generations having to maneuver their desires within the framework of this diaspora. It also has to do with the need for mobility in the new setting and the opportunities that are not equally available across this population for numerous reasons. The vigorous interest in this general concept of hybridity in postcolonial studies cannot be explained away as just a trendy thing. The fact that Bhabha’s hybridity has come to have such vast applicability can be seen, in part, as fulfilling an urgent theoretical need. It is not the case that all theoreticians investigating the broad question of hybridity as creolization, intercultural interaction or any of its other forms, are necessarily creating responses to the notion of diaspora as were the créolité critics against négri-

tude or in, say, the way Paul Gilroy does.⁷ But together they create an influential discourse (postdiaspora) that I have put under the umbrella term of creolization for the moment.

CREOLIZATION POST DIASPORA: A MARXIAN TAKE ON HYBRIDITY?

Theorists of hybridity such as Homi K. Bhabha, Françoise Lionnet, Paul Gilroy, and Stuart Hall employ this discourse of creolization, with a very varied vocabulary, as a way to combat the domination of one voice, one canon, one mode of thought, singular identities, linear history, and so forth. This is evident when Hall writes, regarding the new cinema, that it “allow[s] us to see and recognise the different parts and histories of ourselves, to construct those points of identification, those positionalities we call in retrospect our ‘cultural identities.’” (“Cultural Identity and Diaspora” 402). Lionnet also writes similarly, for example: “The global mongrelization or métissage of cultural forms creates complex identities and interrelated, if not overlapping, spaces” (*Post-colonial Representations* 7).⁸ Further, hybridity, in whatever guise, is linked to contingency and is time-bound. That is, the analysis of hybridity (and of specific instances of it) is obliged to account for a historicity, while at the same time the impulses of this process are to valorize synchrony over diachrony. In fact, the impulse of hybridity (as creolization as opposed to diaspora) has much in common with the communist one. The analogy I shall proceed to make between these two discourses is linked to a particular type of politics that they seem to share and that I wish to privilege in reexamining our interest in hybridity. The analogy also serves to bring into sharp focus the distinction between discourses of creolization and those of diaspora.

The Communist Manifesto claims that bourgeois society is dominated by the past while in communist society the present dominates the past (Marx and Engels 485). Similarly, a dialectic between diaspora and creolization is identifiable with diasporic discourses relying on a past trauma that justifies a present affiliation and solidarity, whereas creolizing discourses, even if not concerned with an actual erasure of the past trauma, direct their energies toward interaction and new connections in the present.⁹ Diaspora discourses must distinguish, for example, between African or Indian or Chinese or even Islamic diasporas. Discourses of creolization sound like this notorious proclamation: “Neither African, nor European, nor Asian, we proclaim ourselves Créole” (Bernabé et al.).¹⁰ Therefore, just as the Manifesto claims that “Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working class parties (483), the créolistes’ manifesto does not emphasize the different diasporic

affiliations. Just as the bourgeoisie, in the terms of the Manifesto, “produces its own grave-diggers” (483), so too diaspora eventually saw creolization announce its practical demise in giving up a “sacred homeland” (Hall “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” 401). If “the essential condition for the existence, and for the sway of the bourgeois class” (Marx and Engels 483) is the formation and augmentation of capital, the essential formation of diaspora rests on the capital of the idea of the mother country. If capital’s condition is wage labor and the competition between laborers, then diaspora is also historically linked to quantifiable labor, where the competition or at least the comparison of, for example, African slave labor versus Indian indentured labor, is identifiable.

I have used this analogy to show how in our own recent theoretical history in postcolonial studies from diaspora to creolization, we are inevitably speaking of periodization. The idea of periodization in postcolonial studies is linked to a critique of modernization and development within the colony-metropolis relationship. Periodization is repudiated and hybridity intervenes as a way out of this kind of sustained historicity because it privileges the here and now. Such a political relationship to history, for Hall, is “[n]ot an essence, but a positioning” (“Cultural identity and Diaspora” 395). Marxism, on the contrary, ends up undervaluing much of the formerly colonized world in its comparison to the “developed” world, comprised of the imperial nations. In postcolonial hybridity, the long view of history is usually given up in favor of focusing on a synchronic reality that can privilege the present engagement of those who comprise these societies. Bhabha and Lionnet, who invokes Bhabha, use hybridity as a way of valorizing the struggles of subaltern subjectivities within History. In Lionnet’s reading of postcolonial women writers, “[t]he postcolonial subject [. . .] becomes quite adept at braiding all the traditions at its disposal” (*Postcolonial Representations* 5). Bhabha’s “purpose in specifying the enunciative present in the articulation of culture is to provide a process by which objectified others may be turned into subjects of their history and experience” (*Location* 178). Development, on an historical view, emerges in terms of the technological advancement and modernization visible in culture accomplished by the developed world and, not in small measure, we might add, due to the latter’s long enterprise in the various colonies. Domination is seen as inevitable and all encompassing. These theorists suggest a valuable reconsideration of such a unitary view of historical domination and in this way join up with the essential *raison d’être* of anthropological discourse. As suggested by Marcus and Fischer, this view, in the twentieth century, “has stood for the refusal to accept this conventional perception of homogenization toward a dominant Western model” (1; see also 67). For these latter, anthropology’s mission is to show how difference exists, to explicate this

difference, and then use this difference as a counter point to critique your own culture (1 and 20, for example).¹¹ In this way, as Bart Moore-Gilbert has noted, evoking Tangiers in Barthes' *Pleasure of the Text* and China in Julia Kristeva's work, while "the East may function as a means by which to deconstruct the authority of the West [. . .] it is still being appropriated [. . .] as a solution to 'internal' Western cultural problematics" (128). In these prominent theories of hybridity, metropolitan marginalization or marginalized theoretical positioning within the academy provides much of the impulse to undo the authority of assimilation. I am interested in bringing together hybridity that derives from the metropolitan (epistemological) encounter of these theorists with authoritative readings of culture (even when the matter these theorists analyze is not necessarily canonical), and hybridity in postcolonial regions (former colonial holdings where the political apparatus has been strongly marked by their colonial history). I am also interested in testing the viability of agency as it is conceived in these new theories of hybridity by examining readable claims to agency in overtly "hybrid" postcolonial locations.

It is possible to trace among these theories (provisionally grouped under creolization) an intellectual "solidarity," to borrow a term from Ian Baucom's article on what he calls Frantz Fanon's radio. In this more generous view, we can follow Baucom's explanation (where he is speaking specifically of the affiliation of Gilroy and Fanon) that:

. . . it is a form of solidarity which does not insist that Gilroy say again what Fanon has said before. It is the discursive enactment of a solidarity which does not imply that intellectual solidarity demands a community of those who speak and think the 'same.' Rather, intellectual affiliation here constitutes itself in much the same fashion that Fanon indicates a subaltern collectivity produces itself—through listening and re-creating, paying attention and remaking. Solidarity, thus understood, demands both a 'common' narrative, canon of experience, or object of attachment and a set of differentiated reproductions of that common thing; a common consent to listen and a collective dissent of interpretation; not so much an identity in difference as a differencing in identity. To my mind, this sort of performative solidarity provides a model (if an admittedly paradoxical 'model') for the ways in which intellectual workers might construct their critical 'solidarity' with one another. (p 35)

In privileging subaltern agency, these theories simultaneously suggest that hybridity is a positive, resistive force to cultural hegemony. What is less obvious is the ways in which such cultural resistance is tied to other types of social resistance to economic oppression. It is unclear as to how immediate opposition that can be identified in texts, art, and theory participates in restructuring

what supports and enables cultural hegemony. Also, the promotion of hybridity by capitalism's bringing together different parts of the globe is not accompanied by a theoretical evaluation of this contradiction.

HYBRIDITY IN THEORY

While sharing this concern for the agency of subaltern subjects, each of these theories focuses on quite particular aspects of hybridity.¹² Françoise Lionnet's *métissage* is presented as a methodology of intertextuality and interdisciplinarity in analyzing postcolonial realities. In citing Glissant's writing, Lionnet preserves the French term "*métissage*" rather than the preferred "creolization," employed by his translator Michael Dash in order to refer "to the racial context" (*Autobiographical Voices* 4, note 6). However, the term *métissage* more generally in her writing refers to an enabling "reading practice," described as follows:

Métissage is a form of *bricolage*, in the sense used by Claude Lévi-Strauss, but as an aesthetic concept it encompasses far more: it brings together biology and history, anthropology and philosophy, linguistics and literature. Above all it is a reading practice that allows me to bring out the interreferential nature of a particular set of texts, which I believe to be of fundamental importance for the understanding of many postcolonial cultures. If, as Teresa de Lauretis has pointed out, identity is a strategy, then *métissage* is the fertile ground of our heterogeneous and heteronomous identities as postcolonial subjects. (*Autobiographical Voices* 8)¹³

Métissage is the way to "think *otherwise*" [italics in original], and is "a concept and a practice: it is the site of indecidability and indeterminacy, where solidarity becomes the fundamental principle of political action against hegemonic languages" (*Autobiographical Voices* 6). This solid grounding in solidarity leads to the conviction that in this practice, "[t]o establish nonhierarchical connections is to encourage lateral relations: instead of living within the bounds created by a linear view of history and society, we become free to interact on an equal footing with all the traditions that determine our present predicament" (*Autobiographical Voices* 7). Such an ideal informs Lionnet's method of *métissage* and is the innovation of her first book where she "chooses[s] authors across time and space and read[s] them together for new insights" (*Autobiographical Voices* 7–8). My interest in pursuing hybridity is to pause further at the way in which we can conceive how such innovation plays out in social locations and how these nonhierarchical connections are attempted across recognizable social groups and generalized from literary texts to other social texts.¹⁴ Lionnet

allies her work with poststructuralist epistemologies, stating that: “If métissage and indeterminacy are indeed synonymous metaphors for our postmodern condition, then the fundamental conservatism of those who fight against both should be obvious” (*Autobiographical Voices* 17). To question the ways in which reliance upon particular instances of indeterminacy and métissage might also imply an acceptance of capitalism as a central structural feature of the current world, which promotes these very aspects, need not necessarily be representative of any kind of “conservatism.” Neither does questioning the limits of capitalism in supporting the efforts of marginalized groups to eschew indeterminacy and make claims for their constituents.¹⁵

When Stuart Hall uses the term “diasporization,” which he coins, it actually encompasses the sense of creolization (as postdiaspora) we have been discussing: the process he describes involves improvisation by black jazz musicians, rappers, etc., and “the process of unsettling, recombination, hybridization and ‘cut-and-mix’ arising out of ‘diaspora experience’” (Hall “Deviance” 293). He sees art as being able to constitute peoples as “new kinds of subjects” (Hall “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” 403). In both these descriptions, what is emphasized is movement across boundaries in an aesthetic and/or theoretical quest. Bhabha’s hybridity is more concerned with an assessment of the unitariness of dominating discourses, which are then revealed to be fractured, doubled, and unstable. But he also believes in the remedial power of a new conception in which he makes a “shift from the cultural as an epistemological object to culture as an enactive, enunciatory site” (*Location* 178). In this form, culture is revealed to be hybrid, and this hybridity provides the space from which subaltern agency can be enabled. Hybridity is generated by dominating discourses:

If the effect of colonial power is seen to be the *production* [emphasis in original] of hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions, then an important change of perspective occurs. It reveals *the ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority* and enables a form of subversion founded on that uncertainty, that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention.” [my emphases] (Bhabha *Location* 173)

So, for Bhabha, even if the hybrid arises from contact, it is hybridity within what was (seen to be) coherent and a unity that he calls up. In this way, his version of hybridity gestures more directly to the unequal position of power within which hybridity is created.

In the case of all the theorists mentioned, the material they consider, or at least the lens that informs their analyses, is anchored in a moment or a

period that follows either colonial contact (Bhabha on India) or the shunting of populations to new lands under colonialism (Gilroy and Lionnet) or immigration to the metropolis (Hall or Bhabha). The analogy with communist discourse made earlier serves to foreground the positioning of this later discourse of what I grouped as creolization against an earlier moment of diaspora by its renouncing of the trauma that was central to diaspora. Instead these theories focus on the notion of difference.¹⁶ The similarity with anthropological discourse brings into sharp focus the stake in hybridity and difference in an age that has been increasingly, or at least more overtly, marked by economic and cultural interconnectedness, most often on unequal terms.

In more specifically diasporic discourses, the bases of solidarity, as Ian Baucom remarks with Freud, is trauma. Trauma is heard rather than seen, and is that which was even “overheard.” If trauma is the “tradition” of diaspora, then, we are tracking, with Freud, its transmission over generations. Diaspora is thus held up by trauma. That is, it is the memory of shared trauma that assures diasporic cohesion in the present.

If there is the possibility for diasporic discourses to inscribe a return—even mythical—it is perhaps not so much to the mother country as to trauma itself. The ground or space from which diaspora discourse transmits itself, the space also that its listening communities occupy or create in this act of listening, is trauma. Discourses of creolization when theoretically positioned post-diaspora renounce trauma as a space from which to speak. I want to clarify that this move refers to theories growing out of what we call the New World experience that is based on imported slave labor, as well as new immigrations to various metropolises for their beginnings. In this way, it is evident that I am placing Bhabha’s theory of hybridity as having its theoretical framework develop from this history as much as, or even more than, simply from the history of the British in India. The already shaky, unseen space of the mother-country can only be felt into being by passing through trauma for the diasporic imagination. This base is pulled from under the feet of diaspora to project creolization into the ungrounded, unstable, and ambiguous terrain that we chart through theorists such as Bhabha. My point, in having separated these terms, is that the different politics implied by them, each of which equally, but differentially, claims the hybrid is worth noting.

In reality, though, I want to suggest that if we might designate this theoretical distinction by relentlessly reinscribing time and space in order to distinguish between diaspora and creolization, most postcolonial discourses have claims to both spaces. This is evident in Paul Gilroy’s efforts to extend the notion of “diaspora” to the sense of creolization we have been discussing. For him,

[t]he value of the term 'diaspora' increases as its essentially symbolic character is understood. It points emphatically to the fact that there can be no pure, uncontaminated or essential blackness anchored in an un sullied originary moment. It suggests that a myth of shared origins is neither a talisman which can suspend political antagonisms nor a deity invoked to cement a pastoral view of black life that can answer the multiple pathologies of contemporary racism. (*Small Acts* 99)

Through his study of black music, Gilroy seeks to "comprehen[d] the lines of affiliation and association which take the idea of diaspora beyond its symbolic status as the fragmentary opposite of an imputed racial essence" (*Small Acts* 141). Still, his writing is essentially concerned with "the discontinuous histories of black populations" (*Small Acts* 98) all over the world or the exploration of what a "black aesthetic" might be (*Small Acts* 116) rather than that of different populations within the same space. This tension shows the ways in which both tendencies are essential to forging an effective discourse of postcolonial hybridity. It is therefore probably useful, if we wish to preserve the distinctions that these terms allow, to employ them as analytical tools that allow us to track these two opposite forces as they speak through the same voice. One might even say that it is their simultaneous but precarious presence within the same voice or narrative that actually permits current postcolonial discourses to *be* that Third Space celebrated by Homi Bhabha.

The significance of this terminology to our realities today is evident when we consider, for example, R. Radhakrishnan's recent book, entitled, *Diasporic Mediations: Between Home and Location*. In this book, among other things, he considers the delicate difference in the relationship to India between two individuals (himself and his son) living away from India, but separated from each other by the relative histories of two different generations. In his concluding chapter, entitled, "Is the Ethnic 'Authentic' in the Diaspora?" he asks: "If a minority group were left in peace with itself and not dominated or forced into a relationship with the dominant world or national order, would the group still find the term 'authentic' meaningful or necessary?" (211). In my view, such a conception of a minority group without a specifiable relationship in which it is a minority does not allow further theorization regarding authenticity or anything else. It is the forging of a consciousness of subalternity or minority status by means of a contradiction within an identifiable totality that can make such a group recognizable. Totality becomes an essential factor in thinking hybridity in this book.

We can identify, with regard to hybridity, the following three broad positions:

1. Hybridity is everywhere. It represents in many instances the triumph of the postcolonial or the subaltern over the hegemonic. The resistant always appropriates the cultural onslaught and modifies its products or processes for its own purposes. This position is most prominently associated with Bhabha, but also held by Hall and Lionnet, for example.
2. Hybridity is not everywhere. It is only the elite who can afford to talk about hybridity. For others, there is no investment in such a concept. It applies more to metropolitan elite emigrés and far less to migrant diasporas and even less to those who have “stayed behind” in the (ex)colony. This position can be associated with critics of Bhabha’s textuality, such as Benita Parry.
3. Hybridity, when carefully considered in its material reality, will reveal itself to actually be a history of slavery, colonialism, and rape, inherited in terms of race. It is a difficult and painful history of interracial identity. It joins up with issues of choosing one’s affiliations or having one’s affiliations thrust upon one. Today, any account of hybridity must contend with this history. Vergès provides a powerful demonstration of this in *Monsters and Revolutionaries*. My analyses of Indian Ocean discourses of hybridity suggest that social engagement with hybridity calls up this signification.

Taking seriously a critic such as Françoise Vergès, I will activate Raymond Williams’s notion of structure of feeling to validate the deep connections of hybridity to culture and material history in chapter 2. In this way, hybridity is intimately linked to the question of resistance to homogenization or assimilation and it thus implies an engagement with what we might broadly call subaltern agency.¹⁷

It is suggestive, indeed, to show how postcolonial thought and creative energies participate in and structure Modernity so as to prove that the “rest” also has claims to what has been seen as the prerogative of the “West.”¹⁸ In chapter 6, devoted to Edouard Glissant, I will be interested in a more direct reading of Glissant through a Marxian lens. I am interested, eventually, in reconnecting the thought of this influential thinker to the more explosive, and more obviously Marxian, thought of his compatriot Frantz Fanon. When I use the term Marxian, I refer directly to the ultimate desire underlying any Marxian praxis, which is revolution for social change that collapses particular inequalities. Therefore, the gesture in this book of allying more closely than has been done before, the thought of Glissant and that of Fanon is less about a categorization as Marxian or Caribbean and even less about a stake in Modernity. Instead, it is linked to my belief that the affect and politics that issue from the life and work of Fanon offers, more than any other strategy I

can identify, something to the urgency with which the differential inequalities in what we call the “postcolonial world” demand to be addressed. A world, as Achille Mbembe has shown in the African context, bruised by colonialism, ridden with contradiction from internal leadership, and, ultimately, savagely undermined by capitalism.

Fairly recently, Fredric Jameson declared, in what has become a sentence structure rather notoriously his own, that: “[a]ll cultural politics necessarily confronts this rhetorical alternation between an overweening pride in the affirmation of the cultural group’s strength, and a strategic demeaning of it: and this for political reasons” (“Globalization and Political” 53).¹⁹ If “diaspora” in the paradigm I specified makes a strategic return to trauma in petitioning for Africans, for example, then creolization can be seen to display an overweening pride in hybrid agency. It is in negotiating the reality and myth of victims and heroes that I want to propose the theories of Fanon and Glissant as the most successful in making a bid for agency.

If, as we generally acknowledge, it is no longer tenable to consider areas of postcoloniality in isolation, it logically follows that our theoretical engagements that arise from the consideration of different zones of contact also urgently demand not to be generated in isolation. Such isolation in the field of theory can be seen despite the commonalities highlighted here within the proliferation of writing on hybridity.²⁰ I believe such isolation in fact puts us further away from a postcolonial project of critical understanding and of enabling the agency of less powerful constituencies. What follows in this book can be seen as a first step in working to remedy it by carefully bringing into dialogue hitherto separately developed versions of hybridity.

Within postcolonial studies, it is no longer clear what is being implied with the use of terms such as diaspora (when Stuart Hall uses the term diasporization it is quite close to what Glissant might mean by creolization), hybridity (when used by Bhabha has a variety of particular meanings that are often not clearly specified in many critical appropriations of his work), *métissage* (means entirely different things for Françoise Lionnet, Edouard Glissant, and Françoise Vergès), intercultural interaction, or even multiculturalism.

As we have seen, creolization is closely concerned with a certain synchronic consideration of a people, is forward-looking, and concerned with interaction, while diaspora is premised on a past (and shared) trauma that constitutes and links the members of a group. I have suggested that these contrary impulses should be analytically separable but that, in reality, most postcolonial discourses, through historical and political necessity, engage in both stances within the same narrative. It is when this negotiation is more successful that postcolonial discourses (and here I include discourses from postcolonial locations as well as

those on them) are able to become an alternative and productive site for staging or at least thinking resistance to hegemonic forces of colonial and other oppressive provenance. When creolization, in the particular way I have described it for analytical purposes, dominates, there is a disregard for history and a utopianism that is, in the end, unrealizable within current realities; when diaspora dominates, there is a tendency to fall into a discourse of victimhood and/or of narrow ethnicities. Both impulses are, however, crucial to the forging of a discourse adequate to the multiple tactics required for a successful postcolonial praxis. In Jameson's terms, the rhetorical alternation between heroism (in the first case) and victimhood (in the latter) is one that takes center stage in constructing discourses of hybridity in the postcolonial context.

It is the precariousness of balancing the two tendencies (within the same voice, the same narrative, the same political intervention, the same discourse) that gives much postcolonial discourse its productive tautness. I will show that it is by concern with, and the urgency of, the double task of representation in the two senses (*darstellen* and *vertreten*, to which Spivak attends in her engagement with Marx's German text) that these impulses are also driven. We will observe how an anthropological account of hybridity requires closer attention to the political/historical story of its manifestation in society. Further, how does one put forth a narrative of one voice to incarnate desires that are in themselves hybrid, but that also come from multiple sources. How can the speaking (unitary) subject convey and perform the multiple, which can also include contraries? How, also, do we make the moment of representation (of) *count*—that is, how do we put it to work, and in this sense enable it to intervene, thus calling up its second meaning (of representation by)? These are some questions that emerge in postcolonial theories of hybridity and to which I provide if not authoritative, then practical, answers based on this critical study of hybridity: considering the various theories, the politics of their application, and an examination of the scope and limits of a practicable discourse of hybridity in "real" hybrid locations.

All of reality is, and always has been, hybrid as most theories indicate. For example: "It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their [particular] hybridity" (Bhabha *Location* 37). In this case, the usefulness of *indicating* hybridity in particular instances must have some basis. It is thus a political gesture whose particular political valence can only have an impact if we are willing to depart from, and specify, these bases. In this way, we demarcate a particular framework or closing-off of an historical moment, action, or geographical space *as* hybrid by

also specifying the terms between or among which such hybridity occurs or is called up. I will argue, following from this, that both history and a notion of totality are essential to a coherent and politically viable conception of hybridity. It seems that this question of specification in the case of the hybrid encounters an instinctive resistance from within the theoretical positioning of hybridity in its various recent derivatives. The vexing complexity of this situation is that such specification is inherently contrary to sophisticated cultural analyses, which rightly hesitate to impute political intent and *explain* aesthetics as a critique of a corresponding outside reality opening up the whole question of “engaged” criticism. My method, or the one I shall strive to achieve here, is to test the suppleness of the derivatives of hybridity as a politics and a mode of understanding in both the theoretical writing as well as other discourses such as literary texts and political speeches.²¹ My aim is to not abandon aesthetics at the moment when it is required to “answer” reality, but rather to valorize this moment as one from where the mode of such a relationship between them is to be forged and understood.

While Vergès has shown what métissage meant for the Réunionese anti-abolitionist movement (*Monsters and Revolutionaries*), I move to a more contemporary assessment of the politics of métissage in La Réunion. Chapter 2 is a study of what Raymond Williams calls a “structure of feeling” that is traced outward from a contemporary autobiographical novel in late-twentieth-century La Réunion. Organized around my reading of the Réunionese author, Monique Boyer’s *Métisse*, chapter 2 indicates how the continued importance of métissage for La Réunion is linked to its racial history and tied to a feeling of nationalism that is inextricably linked to Creole language. Totality emerges as a necessary element to conceive of agency against French nationalism. Contradiction emerges as necessarily privileged in adopting the particular version of hybridity that is Réunionese métissage.

Chapter 3 provides an historical reaching back by showing the origins of métissage as a novelistic trope in Réunionese literature. Métissage in the colonial novel exposes the intricate relationship of hybridity in culture to the colonial enterprise. The jump from colonial hybridity to postcolonial hybridity in examining métissage is seen historically and proves to be at odds with postcolonial theories of hybridity. Chapters 2 and 3 are best read together and in sequence. Chapter 4 moves from La Réunion to the neighboring island of Mauritius. In studying the difficulty of articulating Africanness in Mauritius in the public speeches of the first prime minister, this specific study of Mauritius attends to the differences in the development of a discourse of hybridity in the case of this proximate island. In this way, we are seeing how the use to which hybridity is put makes of it a different derivative and it is for this reason that

my previous discussion of the implicit politics of different theories remains crucial to a larger postcolonial context. It emerges that the concept of “ethnicity” in its particular variation here is closely tied to any derivative of hybridity in the Creole islands. It is also similarly linked to any articulation of hybridity related to the political advancement of a group (be it for recognition, action, or political representation). Multiculturalism (based on cultural difference or ethnicity) has, in the second half of the twentieth century been the subject of various debates around the world in different forms, from affirmative action in the United States to “quotas” in India. Given that the discourse of difference has shifted its vocabulary from that of “race” to “ethnicity,” I turn to the field in which ethnicity is most coherently theorized, indeed from which it is generated.

In chapter 5, I evaluate the anthropological approach to ethnicity in a region that has been held up as the exemplary, successful nation for multiculturalism. Mauritius offers, as seen in anthropology and even economics, a model for multicultural efficaciousness. According to this literature, various groups, bound by cultural ties that are signaled by religious or ethnic categories (Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and Buddhist, or Indian, Chinese, Creole, and White) all live harmoniously and build a strong economy and a plural culture without bloody conflict. Although there have been, in the fairly recent past, some incidents of violence in Mauritius, on the whole, its history has been spared such happenings. I read the anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen’s authoritative study of ethnicity in Mauritius along with the observations of a British colonial administrator on the island regarding the categorizing of the different populations who arrived in Mauritius. I show the ways in which the colonial idiom of race/ethnicity was articulated by individuals situated high within the colonial structure. Such vocabulary and conceptualization were incumbent upon the conditions of settlement, slavery, and indenture, as well as upon the position of this colony within the larger framework of the colonial enterprise historically. Contemporary novels show how a picture of articulating difference in the hybrid nation must contend with different aspects of history: immigration, colonialism, slavery, emancipation, indenture, economic globalism, all of which inform the collective forging of a functioning idiom that posits hybridity and upon which literary authors rely. It is only when seen in such a complex manner that a more full meaning of hybridity in its social occurrence and activation can be suggested.

In anthropology, ethnography as method functions to challenge the notion of a successful homogenization operated by globalization. Through the study of distinct cultures, even if they cannot be considered isolated today, anthropology reveals how these cultures renew their own views of the world or personhood, which are not commensurate with a rejuvenated and modified

universalizing discourse that accompanies globalization. Thus, if the globe is hybrid rather than homogenous, hybridity challenges globalization. Yet, at the same time, the argument turns out to suggest that the encounter of different cultures does not mitigate difference even when there are unequal relations of power in such an encounter. Rather, when properly observed, such encounters can be seen to create a proliferation of difference through resistance or strategic adaptation. In this case, hybridity relies upon globalization. In fact, like globalization itself, the hybrid has developed with and in many aspects even through colonialism and its official demise. For these reasons, I present in this work views of the hybrid that call up different engagements with colonialism and its ongoing legacies and with globalization itself.

La Réunion and Mauritius have not been central in an academic discussion of postcoloniality, yet they are situated, geographically and theoretically, at the crossroads of the most consequential ruminations in recent postcolonial theory: they are crossed by the most vigorous sources of colonialism (French and British), have known both slavery and indenture, between them imply both a new nation as well as an overseas department, and have been marked by their position on the trade routes, colonial maritime projects, as well as cold-war strategy. I am concerned with the different ways in which the vocabularies and concepts of hybridity have been generated and claimed in these spaces as groups and individuals engage in self-definition and coexistence.

In chapter 6 on Edouard Glissant, I provide a Marxian reading of Glissant's notion of *Relation*. In showing his affinity for Marxian categories and Marxian (Hegelian) impulses, I argue that Glissant's derivative of hybridity that is based on observation and connection to the Caribbean Creole reality of his home, rectifies the two main problems in the aforementioned postcolonial theories of hybridity, which inhere in misrecognition of the importance to agency of totality and contradiction. Chapter 7 is a close reading of part of Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, a text that is read frequently in postcolonial studies and eminently from within hybridity by Bhabha. In my reading, Fanon emerges as providing some very important insights into hybridity and confirms the importance of totality and contradiction to agency. These two Caribbean theorists are brought together as sharing a common agenda in the entanglement of their thought with both Marxism and hybridity.

A word about the study of literary texts is in order. Most prominently, Aijaz Ahmad has argued in his *In Theory* against considering English-language literature, in the anglophone context, as the "central documents" (76) of the national context in question because this neglects those discourses that stem from the true location of the people while privileging the position of the national bourgeoisie, who, one is to understand, is already coöpted

from colonialist to capitalistic concerns. While sympathetic to the impulse behind such a pronouncement, I believe it crucial to study the movement of writing (and symbolic capital) from the hands of the colonizers to a new group of French-educated mass in the Creole islands in question, a movement that threatens the very act of writing and the tradition that writing in French calls up. The engagement of writers with Creole spaces, with concerns that have to do with monolingual Creole speakers, or with Creole culture that is at the center of their writing is of central interest in the following chapters.

This study of hybridity in contemporary theory and specific societies is linked to debates on globalization, multiculturalism, and ethnicity. In examining any of these terms the question of the hybrid becomes implicated. Conversely, the contemporary consideration of hybridity inevitably calls up globalization (and its relation to colonialism/imperialism), multiculturalism (and the older question of assimilation), as well as ethnicity (and the elision of race). Each of the following chapters works through these contemporary issues while investigating both their dominant form and hearing the echo of what they often silence, provided here in parentheses. In this way, the two aspects of diaspora and creolization are dialectically positioned and the pull and push between them in the various theories and social contexts is explored.