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Bilingualism of the Other: from Abrogation to (Ex) appropriation

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"…je n'ai qu'une langue, et ce n'est pas la mienne"
Derrida

As discussions about agency in the representation of the postcolonial acquire more impetus, the linguistic dilemma becomes prominent in this debate. Decolonization – a continuous process of resistance with a noticeable heterogeneity of subject positions – emerges from the moment of colonization through multiple and simultaneous articulations of the post/colonial. However, it may not be appropriately evaluated, much less critiqued, if deliberations on agency (who speaks for whom?) are not addressed properly. Agency depends partly on the choice of language in postcolonial writing, and provides an important key to its effectiveness. This article is focused on the linguistic choices some postcolonial authors, such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Ken Saro Wiwa on one hand, and Assia Djebar and Salman Rushdie on the other, made in their writing. Derrida takes up the "language question" in *Monolingualism of the Other*[1] by reflecting upon his own relationship to the French language and the dynamics of political and cultural inclusion and exclusion in colonial Algeria, its meaning and significance for an Algerian Jew. His reactions suggest that the voice of the other is crucial precisely because "language is for the other, coming from the other, the coming of the other" (68). To describe his situation Derrida resorts to Khatibi's statement about "maternal dialect" which he, Derrida, lacks.

> … if he [the Arab writer of French expression] does not

1 There are many possible readings of *Monoligualism of the Other* (Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other or, The Prosthesis of Origin*. Transl. Patrick Mensah Stanford UP, 1998), for example, Barbara Vinken sees it as a "treatise on love, a text of desire" (Barbara Vinken, "The Love of the Letter. Derrida and His Only Lady." (*Cardozo Law Review*. 27, 2, 2005: 877–883), 878. The special issue of *Cardozo Law Review* where her article appeared was dedicated to Derrida's work. I share some of Vinken's ideas regarding *Monoligualism* as a text of desire, a longing for the unattainable oneness, never achieved due to the inherent alterity of language.

> possess his maternal dialect insofar as it is not written, at least he "possesses" it as a "spoken" idiom, which is not the case of the Jew of Algeria, whose maternal dialect - being already the language of the other, of the non-Jewish French colonist- literally lacks the unity, the age, and the presumed proximity of a maternal dialect. Khatibi qtd. by Derrida (63).

However, Derrida is an atypical case. For many postcolonial writers who are bilingual as a consequence of colonization and colonial education, strategies of resistance are embedded in the choice of language as they choose between abrogation and appropriation of the language of the colonizer, the "acquired language" (*langue apprise*),[2] and their own, the "maternal dialect", while at the same time they are also mindful of the access to publication and distribution of their work. This raises an ideological question about the readership at which the work is aimed and whose impact on the writing is obvious. Textual strategies do not encompass only representation, but also include considerations of access to a wider readership, the author's ability to reach a European (?) public, either for "writing back to" or for ingratiating him/herself in a self-exoticizing gesture. The latter may ultimately result in the reduction of the author's authenticity with the "home readership". This was decidedly the case with Algerian writer, Aisha Lemsine's work[3] who tried to reconcile Maghrebi tradition and Western values by adopting the colonizer's gaze in displaying a (duplicitous?) lack of familiarity with Algerian codes of behavior. Not surprisingly, her choice of language is French with a few expressions in Arabic, carefully explained in footnotes, which again, suggest the intended readership the author had in mind.

As Albert Memmi[4], Frantz Fanon[5], Aimé Césaire[6] and others so eloquently stated in many instances that colonization had a de-humanizing effect on the colonized, it is logical to suppose that postcolonial writing will explore the criteria for humanity, in which language must be a key

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2 Abdelkebir Khatibi, *Du bilinguisme* (Paris: Denoël, 1985) 10.

3 Aicha Lemsine, *La Chrysalide* (Paris: Des Femmes, 1976), and *Ciel de Porphyre* (Paris: Jean Claude Simoën, 1978).

4 Albert Memmi, *Portrait du Colonisé précédé de portrait du Colonisateur* (Paris: Buchet/ Chastel, 1957).

5 Frantz Fanon, *Les damnes de la terre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961).

6 Aimé Césaire, *Discours sur le colonialism* (Editions Presence Africaine, 1955).

factor. While representation of the non-human subject operating in the realm of the fantastic propelled by a desire of becoming human through mimiquing humans (Frankeinstenin, Coppelia), the dehumanized subject, the oppressed, the colonized is articulated through language, with all its internal contradictions embodies in Caliban's outburst: "the red plague rid you for learning me your language!"[7]. Clearly, in the colonial context, language is a tool of oppression and as such, also a source of dehumanization (ironically contradicting the generally accepted fact that it is language that makes us human). The colonized will never have the same ideological baggage to signify the language of the colonizer in spite of the colonizer's efforts to infuse the colonized with a hegemonic ideology through education[8]. "Nos ancêtres les gallois" (our ancestors, the Gauls) recited the school children in colonial Algeria. But even with near-perfect language skills and the cultural familiarity, the colonized may never be thought of as the same, s/he may only resort to imitation and mimicry[9] to become "almost the same, but not quite" and will still remain a "subject of difference."[10]

The early models of postcolonial poetics of representation were advanced in the publication of three major works about the colonized and colonizer in the 50's, namely Octave Mannoni's *Prospéro et Caliban. Psychologie de la colonisation*,[11] *Peau noire, masques blancs*[12] by Fanon, and Memmi's *Portrait du Colonisé précédé de portrait du Colonisateur*[13]. These groundbreaking works put forth the first thorough analysis of the psychology of colonization and its effects on *both* the colonized and the colonizer emphasizing the

7 Shakespeare, *The Tempest* Act I, Scene 2.

8 This brings to mind the wonderful diagram Stephen Slemon presented in "Scramble for Post-colonialism" (Bill Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, H. Tiffin eds. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1995: 45-55) that stretched from the "Institutional regulators of the colonial education system" to the "semiotic field" of postcolonial textuality, 46.

9 The meaning of mimicry, coined by Bhabha, goes beyond the act of mimicking; "the menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority." Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. (London: Routledge, 1994): 84.

10 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 126.

11 Octave Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* (Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1990).

12 Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Eds. du Seuil, 1952).

13 Albert Memmi, *Portrait du Colonisé précédé de portrait du Colonisateur* (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1957).

antagonistic relationship between them, which is thematically present in post-colonial writing. The same binary opposition is stressed by Abdul JanMohamed thirty-some years later in what he calls a Manichean relationship between colonizer and colonized.[14]

The act of writing (back) is perceived in these models of postcolonial poetics (only) in terms of decolonization, because such poetics originated from the dialectic juxtaposition of the colonizer and colonized, thus its reactions to colonial discourse and values were characterized by opposition and by the subversion of the fundamental signifiers of the colonial enterprise, i.e. the 'civilizing mission'. Many critics (Angel Rama[15], Barbara Harlow[16]) commented on the colonial uses of writing as yet another tool for asserting authority. Harlow refers to Hugo Blanco, a Peruvian organizer who —seeking justice for landless Quechua peasants— lead a rebellion in the 1960's. During the 25 years he was jailed he wrote *Land or death: the peasant struggle in Perú*[17], in which he explains the way of paper is viewed by the mostly illiterate Indigenous population:

> It is necessary to understand that for centuries the oppressors of the peasants made them regard paper as good. Paper became a fetish: Arrest orders are paper. By means of paper they crush the Indian in the courts. The peasant sees papers in the offices of the governor, the parish priest, the judge, the notary - wherever there is power; the landowner too keeps his accounts on paper. All the reckonings you have made, *all your logical arguments, they refute by showing you a paper*; the paper supersedes logic, it defeats it. ... (84 my emphasis).

The act of writing in itself is considered by many critics (Ashcroft[18],

14 In *Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa* (Amherst: University of Massachussetts Press, 1983) JanMohamed addresses the questions surrounding the representation of both the colonizer and colonized in African colonial narrative by underlining the binary structure of the colonial ideology.

15 Angel Rama, *La ciudad letrada* (Hanover, NH: Ediciones del Norte, 1984).

16 Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987).

17 Hugo Blanco, *Land or Death. The Peasant Struggle in Peru* (New York: Pathfinder, 1972).

18 Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989).

Boehmer[19], Harlow) as an act of resistance that supposes the existence of a center and margin(s), the periphery from which one might write back. Thus contextualized, the language choice in early postcolonial writing –we might assume– oscillates between the two poles of cultural decolonization, reflected in the attitude of the authors vis-à-vis the colonial languages, namely that of abrogation or appropriation. Abrogation, in this context, is the rejection of normative forms of the colonizer's language as opposed to its non-standard and dialectal use in the colonies, and appropriation is the adaptation of the colonizer's language for postcolonial writing. Postcolonial authors are faced with the predicament to choose between abrogation and appropriation of the colonial language, in which – most likely– they have been educated. If this were the case, their ability to write in their native language is often hindered by the lack of formal education in it. Leila Abouzeid, a Moroccan journalist writing in French made an effort to learn formal Arabic (*fus'ha*) — in addition to the dialectal version, (*darija* دارجة) she grew up with— in which *The Year of the Elephant* and her other books were published. She made a conscious choice to write in Arabic, "for political as well as personal reasons"[20].

Referring to French debates about postcolonial writing, Alec Hargreaves recognizes that *francophonie* is a problematic term; yet he considers it as a possible uniting factor of diverse cultures[21]. It seems to be rather ironic that postcolonial existence (and aesthetic) should be defined by a uniting element imposed by colonization: the language, whose use itself is problematized by postcolonial authors, such as Édouard Glissant[22], Derek Walcott[23] and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o[24]. Some critics

19 Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

20 Elizabeth Warnock Fernea, "Introduction," in *The Year of the Elephant*, by Leila Abouzeid (Austin TX: Texas University Press, 1989: xi–xvi.), xii.

21 Hargreaves, Alec G. *Post–Colonial Cultures in France* (London: Routledge, 1997), 1-3.

22 Edouard Glissant, *Le discours antillais* (Paris: Seuil, 1981).

23 The famous lines of "Far Cry from Africa" express this ambiguity: "I who have cursed / The drunken officer of British rule, how choose / Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?" Derek Walcott, "A Far Cry from Africa "(PoemHunter.com http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/a-far-cry-from-africa/).

24 Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind. The Politics of Language in African Literature* (New York: Heineman, 1986).

(Ngũgĩ [25], Kamau Brathwaite[26]) have stressed the need to recuperate pre-colonial languages and cultures, or – as the former is not really possible – to appropriate the languages of the colonizer while abrogating the elitist uses of it. Brathwaite participated in the debate regarding the conflict between Caliban and Prospero over language, and (thus) power, using this oft-referred trope for the relationship of colonial and post-colonial subjects to refute the Queen's English and assert his notion of "nation language" and to write in "Sycorax video style"[27]. Another eloquent example for appropriation with a difference is found in Ken Saro Wiwa's novel, *Sozaboy*[28] [Soldier boy] in "rotten english" [sic] as opposed to "big big English" whose definition he gives as "tedious, erudite arguments or statements in standard English" (author's note, *Sozaboy*), and Ngũgĩ, who –after publishing his influential work, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*– decided to write in his native language, Gikuyu[29]. "I believe that my writing in Gikuyu language, a Kenyan language, an African language, is part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggles of Kenyan and African peoples" (*Decolonizing*… 29). Later he reverted to English[30] because he recognized the importance of the influence he was able to emit reaching the English–speaking public. Syncretist critics argue, though, that because postcolonial authors

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25 Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, "Farewell to English," in *The Post–Colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin (London: Routelgde, 1995), 438–442.

26 Kamau Brathwaite, *Middle Passages.* (New York: New Directions, 1993).

27 xodus from the house of bond
–age into james bond in-bond shops &
rats & cats & garbridge
so chalkstick smiles. accepting another
black hostage
of verbs

[format sic] Kamau Brathwaite, *X/Self.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, on-line. http://www.octopusmagazine.com/issue05/recovery_project/mcsweeney_on_brathwaite.htm).

28 Ken Saro Wiwa, [1985] *Sozaboy* (New York: Longman, 1994).

29 Since turning to Gikuyu, Ngũgĩ has written *I Will Marry When I Want* (with Ngũgĩ wa Mirii), *Devil on the Cross*, and *Matagari,* among others.

30 Aside from *Decolonizing the Mind*, Ngũgĩ has written several works in English: *Weep Not, Child*, *A Grain of Wheat*, *The River Between,* and *Petals of Blood*, as well as a memoir, *Detained,* chronicling the time he spent detained by the Kenyan government.

appropriate the European novel form, a novel even in Quechua or Gikuyu is inevitably a cross–cultural hybrid, and decolonizing projects must recognize this. That is why some African authors (among them Gilbert Doho of Cameroon) opt for a performative genre, such as Theatre for Social Change[31], with a strong element of improvisation. Ngũgĩ also used this form after his self-reported "epistemological break" with English, for he wished to address the local audience. The Kamiriithu theater project was admittedly born as a reaction to a question by a woman in Kamiriithu village: "We hear you have a lot of education and that you write books. Why don't you and others of your kind give some of that education to the village?" (Ngũgĩ, *Decolonizing*…42). The oppositionality of the form –– beyond the use of Gikuyu language– mattered even more, for meaning was conveyed almost as effectively as by language, by the non-verbal, performative aspect.

This treatment of the language (English in this case) by postcolonial authors is what I term "ex-appropriation" because it is appropriating *from* (ex) the language, while inserting another, different linguistic substratum. English is no longer owned by the British Empire; the ex-colonized are now co-owners and World Englishes (in plural) became an accepted fact[32]. Chantal Zabus suggests that Saussure in his *Course in General Linguistics*[33] had distinguished between *langue,* the idealized grammatical form, distinct from *parole*, that refers to real language interactions. Postcolonial critics argued that Saussurian linguistics has marginalized the social aspects of language by bracketing the *parole* and by concentrating on the *langue*. Ashcroft, for instance, proposes to redress this imbalance by reinstating the *parole*.[34] Zabus, in another in informative article, speaks of "relexification" of one's

31 As Gilbert Doho suggests, Theatre for Social Change is performed by "the prostitutes of Bamako, the street boys of Harare, the pygmies in the Central African rainforest, and the inhabitants of the remotest villages in Africa are all using performance to empower themselves." Gilbert Doho, "Foreword." Louise M. Bourgault. *Playing for Life Performance in Africa in the Age of AIDS*. (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2003) vvii.

32 World Englishes nowadays are an accepted fact. There is an organization (IAWE) and a journal with the same title available on-line: http://www.wiley.com/bw/journal.asp?ref=0883-2919.

33 Ferdinand de Saussure, [1916] *Course in General Linguistics,* eds. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, trans. Roy Harris (La Salle, IL: Open Court. 1983).

34 Chantal Zabus, "The Empire Writes Back to and from the centre," Introductory Lecture. (University of Louvain. http://www.limag.refer.org/Cours/Documents/PresAshcroftZabus.htm)

mother tongue[35]. As the contest is between the periphery and the center evolves, it does by the same token between language variants, or "the new englishes" (at the time) and a standard code. Discourse uttered in local English has thus been labeled a "counter-discourse" which entails writing back "with an accent," such as Salman Rushdie's writings, or Arundathi Roy's. "The crucial function of language as a medium of power in postcolonial writing defines itself by seizing the language of the center and replacing it in discourse fully adapted to the colonized place"[36].

But, of course, English is not the only "colonizing" language that has gone through transformation and recodification. Assia Dejbar's novels, where tensions between French and the Arabic subtext are not only manifest at the level of morphology or syntax, but also by what may or may not be said in either of these languages. Because of the sexually segregated nature of certain sectors of Arabo–Muslim societies, direct performative exchange (verbal or written) across genders is not viable in Arabic, but it is in French. This is a space provided by the colonial system of which Djebar makes use to create a plausible representation of postcolonial cultural hybridity. The love-letters in her *L'amour la fantasia*[37] are addressed to a particular subject, yet the love emanating from the letters in the first place is the love of the language (French and Arabic) and the love of the empowerment through writing. The same idea, language-as-desire is expressed in a powerful way in *Amour bilingue* by Abdelkebir Khatibi[38] who emphasizes the role of cultural translation manifest in the hybridity of postcolonial identity.

Another linguistic innovation —aiming at asserting and affirming the presence of colonized languages within the colonial language— was introduced by Peruvian novelist, José María Arguedas (1911-1969) in *Los ríos profundos*[39] (Deep Rivers), as well as his other narrative works. Arguedas was a native speaker of Quechua and an award-winning writer in Spanish. To contest the Tarzan-like speech patterns emitted by indigenous characters supposedly in their own native tongue in the novels by the (mostly

35 Chantal Zabus, "Relexification" in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Bill Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, H. Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995), 314-318, 314.

36 Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back* (London: Routledge, 1989), 38.

37 Assia Djebar, *L'amour, la fantasia.* (Paris: Jean Claude Lattès, 1985).

38 Abdelkebir Khatibi, *Amour bilingue* (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1983).

39 José María Arguedas, *Los ríos profundos* (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1981). [English version: *Deep Rivers,* trans. Frances Horning Barraclough (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 2002)].

monolingual) so-called *indigenista* authors[40] in Andean countries (Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador) during the early 20th century, Arguedas decided to transpose Quechua syntax into the Spanish language and thus make the reader aware of the linguistic heterogeneity at play in the text. This linguistic device was crucial to create an authentic diegetic milieu, but also to establish an authentic hybrid cultural space in which heterogeneity was counterbalancing the colonial supremacy of the Spanish language, whose imposition, after all, was not as complete as it has been wished, due to the resilience of many indigenous languages[41].

Oppositional tendencies were eventually fading in the postcolonial scene because of their tendency to operate based on European models of Aristotelian mimesis (as opposed to more recent postcolonial textual strategies more akin to Bhabha's mimicry[42]), and because the dichotomy lead to essentialist and homogenizing notions of colonizer and colonized alike. But the most important critique against advocates of oppositional theories revolves around the constant recreation of the dichotomy center/periphery where the main point of reference is ultimately tied to the hegemonic discourse they were trying to combat. Cuban novelist, Alejo Carpentier's contribution to what later became known (erroneously) as "realismo mágico" (magic realism) illustrates this point. In the prologue of *El reino de este mundo* (Kingdom of This World)[43] Carpentier speaks of "lo real maravilloso" (the marvellous real/ity) as the key to the authenticity of Latin American representations of the postcolonial, based on a collective belief system and embodied in the "other" perspective of the witness-protagonist, the ex-slave, Ti Noël, whose perception of the rebel slave, Mackandal's survival of his own execution (in punishment for his

40 *Indigenista* authors, such as Ciro Alegría (Peru), Jorge Icaza (Ecuador), Jesús Lara (Bolivia) to a lesser degree, in the first half of the 20th century were non-indigenous writers whose subjects were shaped by racial difference, whereas Arguedas envisioned a Peruvian "cosmic race" to use the expression of Mexican author, José Vasconcelos, *La Raza Cósmica* ([1925] Mexico D.F., Espasa Calpe, S.A., 1948).

41 Campbell reports between 550 and 700 languages for the whole region in 1997. Lyle Campbell, *American Indian Languages: The Historical Linguistics of Native America.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

42 Homi Bhabha, "The Other Question" in *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A* Reader, ed. Padmini Mongia (New York: Arnold Books, 1997): 37–54.

43 Alejo Carpentier, "Prólogo." *El reino de este mundo.* (1949) on-line, http://lahaine.org/amauta/b2-img/Carpentier%20(El%20reino%20de%20este%20mundo).pdf

unsuccessful rebellion) was mirrored in the hopeful, stubborn belief of the Afro-Caribbean slaves in Mackandal's survival, exemplifies this textual strategy. The problematic aspects of "othering" (the term coined by Spivak[44] and the notion serves as the cultural critique of alterity) are multiple. Discourses, where the Other is deliberately represented as such, are directed towards an imperial authority (the self) that negates their entire experience as humans by placing an impenetrable separation between the colonizer and the colonized whereby the "other" can be found only through gaps and absences. The need to uncover other sites, to find both a living presence and vital alternatives, emerged in the postmodern context with the dissolution of canonical borders allowing for the inclusion of voices that had been previously silenced. Cultural critic, Nancy Hartsock comments: "The point is to develop an account of the world which treats our perspectives not as subjugated or disruptive knowledges, but as primary and constitutive of a different world . . . Other possibilities exist and must be (perhaps can only be) developed by hitherto marginalized voices"[45].

In her discussion of alterity, Spivak[46] suggests that the otherness is constructed through imperial discourse of power. Following Lacanian notions of the "*grand Autre*"[47], she also distinguishes between the other and the Other (although their definitions differ slightly). In the Lacanian notion the Other's gaze, sees himself being seen by that gaze and Spivak suggests that the Other and Self were created together in a reciprocal and somewhat circular relationship. In *The Post–Colonial Critic*, Spivak concludes: "Europe has consolidated itself as sovereign subject by defining its colonies as 'Others', even as it constituted them, for purposes of administration and expansion of markets into programmed near–images of that very sovereign self." (99).

Placing emphasis on this "sovereign self" Stuart Hall[48] distinguishes

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44 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Post–Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues,* ed. Sarah Harasym (London: Routledge, 1990).

45 Nancy Hartsock, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?" in *Feminism / Postmodernism*, ed. Linda Nicholson (New York, Routledge, 1990: 32–44): 36.

46 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Who Claims Alterity?" in *Art in theory 1900–1990. An anthology of changing ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison y Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992): 1119–1124.

47 Jacques Lacan, *Cahiers de lectures freudiennes* (Paris: Lysimaque, 1996).

48 Discussing Caribbean identity formation Hall recognizes two processes that affect identity: 1. being (oneness), 2. becoming (discontinuity). He uses Derrida's concept of "différance" to support his postulate.

three kinds of "othering" in a somewhat more nuanced critique.

1. self–othering (where the other is constructed as different within Western categories of knowledge; and is subjected to this knowledge);
2. creolization or racial mixture, two oppositional "vectors" that operate simultaneously: that of similarity and continuity and that of difference and rupture;
3. otherness in metropolitan centers: that is, the difference is "inscribed" in cultural identity[49].

Around the early 90's a transition took place in postcolonial studies. Theorists seemed to be distancing themselves from the binary mode and proposed concepts like "hybridity", "*métissage"*, and "heterogeneity[50], "third space" of enunciation (Bhabha[51], Moreiras[52]). These concepts emerged from a hybrid, ambivalent space of signifiers, denominated as "contact-zone" by Mary Louise Pratt,[53] "in-between-ness" by Renato Rosaldo[54], and "borderland" by Guillermo Gómez Peña[55]. Not unlike Derrida, who expands the Saussurean sign with another (temporal) dimension, Homi Bhabha's "third space"[56] is also added to the colonizer-colonized dichotomy by adding another sign, that of an in-between locus where new meaning can be produced, thus uniting the two discursive communities. From this

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49 Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: a Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 392-401, 394-396.

50 Antonio Cornejo Polar. *Escribir en el aire ensayo sobre la heterogeneidad socio-cultural en las literaturas andinas.* (Lima: Latinoamericana Editores, 2003).

51 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture.* (London: Routledge, 1994).

52 Alberto Moreiras, *Tercer espacio: Literatura y duelo en América Latina.* (Santiago de Chile: LOM, 1999).

53 Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone" *Profession 91*, Modern Language Association, (1991), 33–40.

54 Renato Rosaldo, *Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

55 Guillermo Gómez Peña, "Colonial Dreams/Postcolonial Nightmares," in *The New World Border* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1996), 80-110.

56 Interview with Homi Bhabha, "The Third Space," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990): 207-222.

space alone hybrid meaning will emerge and unravel the cycle of binary opposites by circumventing their direct, mutual engagement. For example's sake I mention the Latin American precedents to notions of hybridity that may be traced back to Fernando de Ortiz's coining of 'transculturación' (transculturation),[57] one of the first attempts to go beyond the binary models in theorizing about the hegemonic imposition of and the resistance to "civilization" and "acculturation".[58] Transculturation is defined as pertaining to a cultural exchange that includes the elements of mutual influence and fluidity. Transculturation is explained by Alberto Moreiras[59] as a phenomenon that arises due to the coincidence of its conception with the emergence of the national–popular state in Latin America at the time. The exploration and evaluation of the concept of transculturation culminates in Angel Rama's work[60] about narrative transculturation that –according to the author—is based on this ambivalent space of enunciation that comes close to being Bhabha's "third space". The quest for an idea that expresses this in-between space of enunciation that would be able to circumvent the stalemate of binary oppositions would resurface in the concept of heterogeneity developed by Antonio Cornejo Polar[61]. Heterogeneity is embodied in the resistance to the homogenizing forces of colonialism, and to the equally Eurocentric ideologies of the nation-state.

Postcolonial societies inherit the trauma of colonialism that subjects people to a cultural displacement. Bhabha connects the idea of cultural; displacement to the broader issue of cultural and national identity. Thus the nation becomes "a liminal signifying space that is internally marked by the discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense location of cultural difference"[62]. Bhabha's theory of postcolonial counter-hegemony with its revisionist strategy opens up new spaces of re-inscription and negotiation not only for resistance to present forms of imperialism, but it goes a long way

57 The term first appeared in Fernando de Ortiz's *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* ([1940] Madrid: Cátedra, 2002)

58 Acculturation was coined by Israel Zangwill in *The Melting-Pot. Drama in Four Acts* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908).

59 Alberto Moreiras, *Tercer espacio: Literatura y duelo en América Latina* (Santiago de Chile: LOM, 1999), 264-265.

60 Angel Rama, *Transculturación narrativa en Amérca Latina*, (México, Siglo XXI, 1982).

61 Antonio Cornejo Polar, "Mestizaje, transculturación, heterogeneidad." (*Revista de Crítica Literaria*, XX, 40, 94), 368–371.

62 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 145-148.

toward interrogating and disintegrating any form of imperialism. However, Edward Said suggests that imperialism is "a word and an idea today is so controversial, so fraught with all sorts of questions, doubts, polemics and ideological premises as nearly to resist use altogether" (*Culture...* 3). Even if centuries of expansionary capitalism, (a form of imperialism) were accepted from a global perspective within which colonialism and postcolonialism are considered as phases, debates about postcolonialism and its historical context would still not be defunct. Postcolonial identity is to be included in the discussion of the "discourses of minorities" as it also contributes to the formation "the heterogeneous histories". The fragmented or hybrid nature of the postcolonial subject demands its construction through subversion of the colonial discourse. These "deconstructive moves" within the texts are used to dismantle master narratives inspired by Eurocentric discourse and, at the same time, to challenge the logocentric categories upon which colonial discourses are based. The postcolonial subject that dwells in the (once) colonized space characterized by modernity is to be positioned on the very boundary of modernity, at the same time within and outside of the hegemonic culture. As Shaobo Xie points out,

> "the hegemonic discourse of modernity tends to subjugate all its subjects to its historicist syntax of narrative, molding their consciousness, structuring their feelings and sensory data accordingly. However, the subject of cultural revision, postcolonial and counterhegemonic in nature, threatens to subvert the hierarchical syntax of modernity."[63]

This subversion is currently taking place through postcolonial and other cultural theories that succeeded in overcoming the binary opposites focusing on the hegemonic aspects of colonization and shifted the emphasis to the post-colonial, to the discursive articulations of the aftermath of colonization.

In her much quoted "Notes of the Post–Colonial" Ella Shohat asks: "When exactly the postcolonial begin?"[64] The historian, Arif Dirlik "misreading the question deliberately" gives an answer that enclose all the ironies surrounding the multifaceted and hybrid identities of postcolonial subjects: "When Third World intellectuals have arrived in First World

63 Shaobo Xie, "Rethinking the Problem of Post–Colonialism" *New Literary History* 28.1 (1997), 7–19, 18–19.

64 Ella Shoh at, "Notes on the Post–Colonial," *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory*, ed. Padmini Mongia. (New York: Arnold, 1997), 322–334, 323.

academe"[65]. Thus the postcolonial angst is not embodied in questions regarding identity, but rather, it is placated by newfound power. This is echoed and expanded in Rosaura Sánchez's question: can one "ever represent a counter-project while being funded, housed and incorporated within the system?" (qtd. in Katrak[66] 2). It is, therefore, the "system" that defines the choice of language in which either authors or critics write and the question is further complicated by continuing neo-colonial trends that interfere in postcolonial spaces as well as in colonizer countries. Thanks to the ever incessant waves of migration to colonizing host countries these became borderlands, contact zones and in-between spaces that "contaminate" the postcolonial language predicament. Derrida's oxymoron of ex-appropriation in the context of the postcolonial global scene unfolding in the ex-metropolis acts in service of a paradigmatic shift, ultimately caused by the mass-migration and commodification-driven globalization.

On the other hand, in parts of the world that even though experienced colonization the term post-colonial may not be appropriate, unless we conceive of the postcolonial as a process, not unlike identity. Otherwise, how to place the label 'post' onto a state which is not yet fully present and linking it to something which has not fully disappeared, but in many ways this paradoxical in-between-ness is precisely what characterizes the postcolonial world that is neither post nor past.

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65 Arif Dirlik, "The Post-Colonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism" (*Critical Inquiry* 20 Winter, 1994), 329-342.

66 Ketu H. Katrak, "Language and Geography: The Postcolonial Critic" *Black Studies* 9 (1992): 2-9.