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Theorizing the Hybrid

"Theorizing the Hybrid" is a special issue of the Journal of American Folklore that critically engages the metaphor of hybridity as it is currently employed in the analysis of narratives and discourses, genres and identities, material forms and performances. Authors in the fields of folklore, cultural anthropology, archaeology, linguistics, literary history, ethnomusicology, and comparative literature reflect on the nature, value, limitations, and dangers of hybridity as both an analytic model and a social practice. Articles consider topics ranging from the premodern to the cybernetic, the biological to the political, the highly localized to the transnational.

THE ARTICLES INCLUDED IN "THEORIZING THE HYBRID" were originally presented at a conference held in March 1996 at the University of Texas at Austin. The aim of the conference was to critically engage the metaphor of hybridity as it is currently employed in the analysis of a wide variety of genres, discourses, and identities. Conceived as a broadly interdisciplinary forum, the conference not only analyzed but enacted hybridity—transgressing disciplinary boundaries, juxtaposing disciplinary styles, contaminating disciplinary discourses. This issue does the same, challenging readers to follow the hybrid from gene to cyborg, stone to cassette, "root" to "route," and to consider relations among biological, discursive, aesthetic, political, and economic aspects of the social phenomena placed under the sign of hybridity.¹

Hybridity Past and Present

In 1982, Victor Turner noted that "what was once considered 'contaminated,' 'promiscuous,' 'impure' [was] becoming the focus of postmodern analytical attention" (1982:77). These words sound patent today, but they may serve as a marker. To what extent does hybridity become a sign for the impure mixings propagated by the dissolution of political, geographic, ethnic, cultural, and aesthetic boundaries? The essays in this issue inquire into the virtue of interrogating such "impurity," casting attention on subjects as diverse as Apache rock and roll, mestizo politics, Israeli Mizrahi

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music, diasporic identity, and transglobal tourist art. Is the analyst of culture “destined to simply accumulate examples of the hybrid” (Franco 1993:141)? Is this accumulation actually a latent theory? or a latent anxiety? In what sense, and in how many senses, is the apprehension of hybrid phenomena necessary for cultural analysis?

The biological root of the metaphor of hybridity was the source of considerable ambivalence for many conference participants. Barrik Van Winkle opened his presentation “‘Mixed Blood’ Hybrid(ity) Discourses in Still-Colonial North America” with a caustic reading of the beginning of the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s definition of *hybrid*:² “Hybrid . . . [from Latin . . . *hibrida* . . . , offspring of a tame sow and wild boar . . .] A. *sb* 1. The offspring of two animals or plants of different species or (less strictly) varieties; a half-breed, cross-breed, or mongrel. . . .” There are, of course, more metaphorical, less biological ways of defining *hybridity*. *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* broadens the definition to include “a person produced by the blending of two diverse cultures or traditions,” “anything of heterogeneous origin or composition,” and, even more generally, “a composite.” We also found a linguistic definition that refers to “a word composed of elements from different languages.” Clearly, not only animal and plants may be seen as hybrid, but people, cultures, traditions, and languages as well. This volume builds on both literal and metaphorical definitions of hybridity, adding yet other shades to a semantic domain that may itself be seen as hybrid.

Because of its ambiguity, the term *hybridity* is bothersome. It threatens to dissolve difference into a pool of homogenization. It is biological, yet resists definition. It is precisely its resistance that forces us to look closely. Under a microscope, the concept transforms before our very eyes. It does not stay still under our gaze. We have the fascination of an alchemist before a bubbling metal, intoning above the fire and heat, relinquishing categories to process, emergence, liminality. But let us demystify.

In order to evaluate the explanatory potential of *hybridity*, it helps to put it alongside other terms of analysis that have been applied to complex cultural phenomena in the last century. *Syncretism* is one of these. Formulated by Herskovits (1966) in order to analyze religious forms like Vodoun (which combines African beliefs and practices with those of Christianity), this theory attempts to explain why, in conditions of displacement and new contact, certain forms are carried over and others are lost. Herskovits does this by positing a sort of magnet effect whereby African traditions most resembling those of the New World attract and adhere to each other, and are therefore maintained and elaborated, while those most different fall away. When resemblance is not present at all, cultural traits that are most dominant are carried over into new cultural contexts and reinterpreted in light of their surroundings. This, he explains, was the case with African religions, which were retained in changed form in the New World when other forms of social structure, like kinship, were lost. The overall effect of Herskovits’s theory is to highlight adaptation, assimilation, and the reconciliation of cultures, rather than their plural coexistence (see Apter 1991; Denbow this issue).

Claude Lévi-Strauss offers the term *bricolage* to the analysis of mixed forms. A bricoleur unhinges forms from their rootedness in history and recombines them in novel ways. Lévi-Strauss applies the term to the seemingly arbitrary combinations of myth motives (mythemes) that link families of American myth narratives.³ Expanded, this concept can be applied to many forms of cultural borrowings that tie together

various influences to produce a new whole—hip-hop, for example, or techno-rave music. Unlike *syncretism*, *bricolage* is particularly apt in describing the unmotivated combinations that characterize the playfulness of postmodern forms (see Turner quote above). That Lévi-Strauss developed the concept in relation to myth—one of the most conservative of genres—well before the advent of postmodernism should temper claims to the “new,” proving (to use a mythic motif) that there are hybrid turtles all the way down.

Finally, *creolization* is *hybridity*’s immediate interlocutor in the discourse of the social sciences and humanities. Originating with linguistic theories that traced the laws governing the emergence of a new creole language from two languages of contact, one dominant and one subdominant, works on cultural creolization focused primarily on the “cultural conditions of creativity” evidenced in mixed expressive forms (Abrahams 1983:xix). Roger Abrahams (1983) employed the metaphor to explain the variations and transformations in social and expressive life resulting from conditions of diaspora, colonialism, and market trade. And as recently as 1987, Ulf Hannerz asserted that “a concept of creole culture . . . may be our most promising root metaphor” in the analysis of the heterogeneity of cultures and the “intercontinental traffic in meaning” (1987:547, 551).

Works on linguistic creolization presaged this focus. In a 1971 publication devoted to pidgin and creole languages, Dell Hymes introduces several productive terms for thinking about cultural mixtures: “When we think of creolization and convergence as kin,” he notes,

we often seem to think of more than convergence in the strict sense of approximation of one variety to another. We have in mind mingling, coalescence, even fusion, of two varieties, especially as involves grammar. Creolization as convergence implies not only approximation, nor mixture even, but *creativity*, the adaptation of means of *diverse provenience to new ends*. [1971:76, emphasis added; see also Whinnom 1971]

The promise of creolization as an analytical tool was inspired not only by linguistics, however, but by works that examined culture at the borders (Paredes 1958, 1977), ritual as it combined traditions and challenged homogeneity (Abrahams and Bauman 1978; Babcock 1978; Smith 1975; Stewart 1978), verbal art as it contested hegemony (Limón 1976; Paredes 1958; Paredes and Bauman 1972; Sherzer 1983), and identity formations as they broke with tradition and reinterpreted history (Bauman 1972). All these creole phenomena have, at their root, the encounter with difference and with power differentials. Indeed, the historic impetus for creolizations of all sorts is exchange. Arising from the need to communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries, creole languages facilitate the transfer of goods and capital, whether symbolic, aesthetic, or economic. As a medium of exchange, then, a creole language, like a creole body or a creole culture, is a locus of power relations. The “root metaphor” of creolization, especially as developed in the linguistic model, holds potential not only for the elucidation of cultural creativity but for the examination of the power relations that imbue such innovations and exchanges.

Why, then, has hybridity predominated in recent cultural analyses? The answer, in large part, concerns practices of citation in academic disciplines (see Briggs and Bauman 1992). Whereas the trope of creolization was employed in works examining language and folkloric forms, the contemporary work in hybridity is cross-disciplinary, evident in studies of popular culture, media, immigrant populations, subaltern studies, and history, as well as expressive culture. In these discourses, hybridity seems to promise a unique analytical vantage point on the politics of culture by acknowledging the intricate and complex weave of any heterodox and heteroglossic community. Ironically, the focus on “hybrid” aspects of cultural phenomena reveals a preoccupation with “how newness enters the world” (Bhabha 1994)—that is, with the very creativity that essays on cultural creolization emphasize. Although untempered celebration of the (subversive) agency of these new forms and identities is perhaps the first critique to be directed against some theories of the hybrid (Ahmad 1995), preoccupation with “the new”—in resistances (Bhabha 1994), contestations (Bakhtin 1986; Stallybrass and White 1986), popular culture (Canclini 1995), and identity politics (Gilroy 1987; Naficy 1993)—provides the contextual ground in which discussions of hybridity have emerged, or rather, re-emerged. For hybridity, itself, is not a new concept in either scholarly or public literature. Indeed, a quick scanning of the word *hybrid* in a university library system brings its historicity and its contradictions to the fore: there are entries on hybrid computers, hybrid languages (creoles, pidgins), and hybrid plant breeding, including theories of hybrid vigor (see Stross this issue). There are also entries on genetics and eugenics; anxious 19th-century writings on miscegenation, with titles like *Holm's Race Assimilation, or, The Fading Leopard's Spots: A Complete Scientific Exposition of the Most Tremendous Question that Has Ever Confronted Two Races in the World's History* (Holm 1910); and both proslavery and abolitionist publications, as well as more recent works on racial mixing, such as *Miscegenation Blues: Voices of Mixed Race Women* (Camper 1994).

There is no doubt that the notion of hybridization has had politically charged and often contradictory currency throughout the past two centuries. Nor are the contemporary uses of hybridity any more coherent or consensual. As Friedrich notes, “All tropes contribute to both ambiguity and disambiguation” (1991:24). There is hybridity that refers to and may reify history and genealogy, for example, and hybridity that seems to make a mockery of it (Ahmad 1995). “What is new is not hybridity itself,” asserts Franco, “but rather the technologies which have globalized and transformed culture” (1993:136). This is evident in realms as formally divergent as material culture and cyberspace. That new forms of identity are born from new technologies is demonstrated, for example, in Stone's work about cyberspace and the construction of transsexualities in that realm (Stone 1995). Where technology itself is not the most salient agent, however, there is still the creative transformation of its refuse. In Senegal, for example, artisans take discarded tin cans and transform them into baggage trunks and toys, and in Morocco old tires are changed into water containers and shoe soles (Cerny and Seriff 1996). As Seriff notes, these objects “tell a story about an aesthetic and cross-cultural process—as well as an economic and political one—which is defined by the act of recovering and transforming the detritus of the industrial age into handmade objects of renewed meaning, utility, devotion, and sometimes arresting

beauty” (1996:10). All these transformations carry a certain ritual seed within them; what it means to be a human changes, but the highly formalized process of subject and object making remains (Schechner 1982).

Forms of Hybridization

“Genres are not to be mixed. I will not mix genres,” asserts Derrida (1980:202), delimiting what he calls the “law of genre,” the necessity of a limit, of a self-identifying mark. But of course, once drawn, it is available for re-marking, erasure, reinscription, redefinition. In fact, this is inevitable. Genres, like utterances, are permeable and unruly. Given to multiple interpretations, arising intersubjectively, they defy uniformity of response.

Like the study of community, the study of genre brings us face to face with boundaries—their temporal solidity, their evanescence, their elusiveness. We recognize a new or mixed genre by what it is not: just as the *beur* population in France is neither French nor Arab but other. *Rai* music is neither disco, nor *muwel*, nor Berber folk: it is all these things, it is none of them. In any case, it is banned in Algeria as heretical, an incitement to revolution. The power of hybrid forms can be measured by the threat that their transgressions evoke. History emerges in the interstices, in the space between precedent and what follows, in the “gaps” between text and its recontextualization (Briggs and Bauman 1992). The fascination with the ambiguous and the negative that characterized so much of the scholarship of the 1970s (Babcock, Douglas, Turner) still infuses our discourses, temporarily settling in discussions of hybrid genres.

What are they, then? A “hybrid genre” is first of all an oxymoron, insofar as hybrid genres are actually anti-genres, defying categorical definition. Most scholars discussing hybrid genres do so drawing on Bakhtin’s notion of genre as an expression of worldview and ideology. Following Bakhtin, genres embody a particular relation to time and space; they are interpretive filters, “points of view” in John Dorst’s words, “constitutive of human consciousness” (1983:415). As Kapchan has noted elsewhere, “Although the most obvious hybrid genres are those which combine ethnic identities, hybridity is effected whenever two or more historically separate realms come together in any degree that challenges their socially constructed autonomy” (1996:6).

Bakhtin does *not* talk about hybrid genres per se. What he does talk about is the linguistic process of hybridization, which he defines as “a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter . . . between two different linguistic consciousnesses” (1981:358). This process may be unconscious or intentional (Bakhtin 1981:358). In the first case, it describes the most basic process of language change (or “evolution”); in the second, a deliberate coding of multiplicity within the syntax of a single phrase or sentence, producing parody, polysemy, or some other disjuncture between meaning and intent. In short, what Bakhtin is describing may be called “a split subjectivity of the utterance” (Kapchan 1993, 1996; Naficy 1993:167).

An example of this is found in what Naficy, in his book *The Making of Exile Cultures*, calls the “ritual genre” of exilic television, which, despite its creation of collective

feeling, or “*communitas*,” among Iranian exiles, also serves to move them more positively into identifications with U.S. culture (1993:90):

By their status as liminal hybrids and syncretic multiples, [exiles (of which Naficy counts himself one)] form a global class that transcends their original or current social and cultural locations. Such figures tend to have more in common with their exilic counterparts at home and in the West than they do with their fellow citizens—either at home or in the host country. It is a relationship that is not so much based on shared originary facts (birth, nationality, color, race, gender) than on adherence to a common imaginary construction. Discourse thus replaces biology. [1993:2]

Home for those living in exile becomes a narrative of loss, reconstituted only incompletely, according to Naficy, in fetishized images of the homeland that help “control the terror and the chaos of liminality” (1993:128) but which also may return to control the exiled community. In nuanced detail, Naficy documents the contradictions of hybrid identities as mediated by Iranian television in Los Angeles, noting that, although “hybridity may . . . produce a critique of the status quo,” it can “just as surely . . . generate ‘aberrant’ (mis)readings” (1993:189). The ambivalence of the hybrid genre may be a strength or a weakness.

Another example of a hybrid genre is found in Hanks’s (1987) discussion of how 16th-century Mayan speech genres infiltrated the more official written genres of their Spanish colonizers.⁴ Hanks’s innovation is to temper Bakhtinian genre analysis with Bourdieu’s theory of practice; genres thus become part of the linguistic habitus, like dispositions bodying forth ideology, structuring interpretation, yet always open to fluctuations in practice.⁵ Elucidating the social positioning of genre *creators* and the strategies whereby they change discursive forms, Hanks addresses the impact of aesthetic improvisation and hybridization at larger levels of social transformation (1987:681), revealing the power relations vested in the hybrid form.⁶

If such permeability of generic boundaries is taken for granted in current research (Geertz 1983), we need only remember more than a century of scholarship in anthropology, folklore, and sociology dedicated to the delineation of boundaries, genre definitions, and social classifications. While scholars like Durkheim, Mauss, Weber, Herskovits, Lévi-Strauss, Bascom, and others recognized that such ideal systems were always surpassed or challenged by actual cases, they also were dedicated to developing a conceptual apparatus with which to analyze and ultimately control their data (cf. Ben-Amos 1976). The scientific (and often evolutionary) presuppositions in this work are evident today. To focus on how genres “leak,” then, is a reaction to this (Enlightenment-informed) preoccupation, a swing to the other side, to “the grotesque of hybridization, [and] the intense interfusion of incompatibles [which challenges] classical reason, with its predilection for a rhetoric of clean antithesis” (Stallybrass and White 1986:48). Indeed, such a focus is particularly imperative for the discipline of folklore because of its deep historical investment in the study of genre. As Appadurai notes,

As music, the novel, television, and tape cassettes begin to enter the fields of the epic, the folk song, and traditional performances generally, what is emerging is a whole new series of hybrid forms. . . . These newly emergent hybrid forms . . . do not necessarily constitute a degenerate and kitschy commercial world to be sharply contrasted with a folk world we have forever lost. In fact, it may be the idea of a folk

world in need of conservation that must be rejected, so that there can be a vigorous engagement with the hybrid forms of the world we live in now. If we embark on this task, our understanding of the textual and intertextual complexities of the past will stand us in good stead, and we are not likely to plunge into a premature requiem for the “lore” of the “folk.” [1991:474]

When discussions of hybridization do not center on expressive and performative genres, they often configure around questions of style, particularly styles of writing and representation. Thus does Narayan bring discussions of hybrid identities and hybrid writing practices together when she calls for an “enactment of hybridity”—by which she means “writing texts that mix lively narrative and rigorous analysis . . . regardless of our origins” (1993:682). Narayan is responding here to scholarship that either privileges or deprivileges the status of the “native” ethnographer. She asserts that although studies by self-designated “halfie” ethnographers like Abu-Lughod, or native ethnographers like M. N. Srinivas and others, have done much to change conceptions of authority and voice in the ethnographic text, a more nuanced conception of positionality is needed, one that considers “each anthropologist in terms of shifting identifications amid a field of interpenetrating communities and power relations” instead of simple insider/outsider polarities (1993:671). On a similar theme, but taking issue with a hybrid ethnography, is Visweswaran’s enactment of what she calls a “hyphenated ethnography.” Visweswaran’s work speaks against “valorizing a generalized hybrid condition,” noting that all hybrids are not equal: “there are also hierarchies of hybridity,” she asserts, which must ultimately be brought “home” and articulated (1994:132). In her work, the difficulties of being “both and neither” are addressed in a close account of genealogy and autobiography, a rhetorical weaving together of separate parts.

The “halfie” or second-generation “hyphenated ethnographer” might be considered to be in a state of in-betweenness, belonging to both and to neither; in the words of Bhabha, “neither One nor the Other but *something else besides, in-between*” (1994:219, emphasis added). For Bhabha, at least, the postcolonial hybrid does not challenge us to disentangle influences like tradition and modernity or to unravel strands of difference. Rather, the postcolonial hybrid stands in resistance to such disarticulations: instantiating identity at the same time that it is subverted. In this, Bhabha seems to concur with Lee, who notes that the “leading edge of change lies in the intersections and interstices of processes beyond the nation-state that have their own global infrastructure. Hybrid spaces created by diasporic migrations are inhabited by bilingual and bicultural resident nomads who move between one public sphere and another” (Lee 1993:174; see also Bhabha 1993:174; Stallybrass and White 1986:80).⁷

Not everyone is equally radicalized by technology; what of places without satellite dishes and cyberspace and peoples without mobility? Must these “elsewheres” be perpetually relegated to “the time-lapse of ‘catching up’ with the west” (Joseph 1994:12)? Néstor García Canclini, in his book *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (1995), responds to this conundrum. Conceptions of the hybrid in Canclini’s work grow out of both the cultural and biological hybridity of Latin American citizens and their reception and creation of modernity in contexts that move from “mass culture to technoculture, from urban space to teleparticipation”

(1995:212). His work is less concerned with the politics of identity, however, than it is with the politics of the public and of the popular, examining how categories like “folklore” and “high art” are created in order to maintain social hierarchies and how they are quickly confounded in the marketing and consumption of tradition and indigenous identities.⁸ Canclini asserts that intercultural hybrid identities, like that of the mestizo, help relativize and dissolve the “hallowed antinomies of cultural thought such as tradition/modern, erudite/popular, oppressor/oppressed” (Lauer 1993; see also Rosaldo 1995).⁹

Like Canclini, Joseph also contests facile binarisms, accusing them of contributing to “overdetermined ideas of what oppression and domination are” (1994). Her response to such overdetermination is quite different, however; she says that

instead of always being in a relationship of uneven development, of unequal power, of unegalitarian alterities, theories of hybridity allow for a theory of pleasure and consumption. Oppressed peoples are not always in a position of subordination. They exist in relation to different economies of pleasure and consumption. To be economically disempowered does not mean that one does not desire, or imagine, or long for other modes of being. Subaltern agency creates informal avenues of disavowal and affiliation that create pleasure within hybrid conditions. Theories of hybridity allow for invisible negotiation with structures of domination through style politics, for instance, or elusive economies of consumption. [1994:12]

Joseph complicates discussions of hybrid identities by questioning facile notions of oppressor/oppressed and by bringing the pleasure of consumption to the fore, yet the question of “subaltern agency” is ultimately left unanswered. What eludes our grasp in economies of consumption are precisely the relations of power among consumers, mediators, images, and capitalists, and, as Canclini remarks, studies on the *reception* of the products of popular culture are still rare (1995:200).

In a recent article that relates identity and genre analysis, Ebron and Tsing assert that

the “community” is no longer territorially enclosed, face-to-face in interaction, pure in origin, or even necessarily monolingual. With these defining characteristics gone, the dispersed, hybrid, polyglot community retains one central core of distinctiveness: its ability to compose itself around an allegory. In this context, the interpretation of allegorical materials becomes a key zone of politics. [1995:2]

Hybridization has become one such analytic allegory, defining lines of interest and affiliation among scholars of popular and literary culture, perhaps quite unintentionally. The extent to which these authors use the metaphor of hybridity consciously and concisely differs. That they use it, however, qualifies hybridity as one of several tropes, or forms of metaphoric predication, that most epitomize the scholarship of the last decade.

Under the Sign of Hybridity

“Theorizing the Hybrid” is divided, rather arbitrarily and quite permeably, into four sections. Part 1, “The Metaphor of Hybridity,” offers two broad and somewhat contrasting assessments of the nature, value, and limitations of hybridity as an analytical

model. Brian Stross's "The Hybrid Metaphor: From Biology to Culture" directly addresses what might be called the "mongrel factor," exploring in considerable detail the implications of hybridity's grounding in biology. Using an example far removed from biology—hybrids of spoken and written communication on the Internet—Stross emphasizes the productive potential of the metaphor's emphasis on process, heterogeneity, and creativity. Stross's discussion of the "hybridity cycle" is particularly valuable in demonstrating that the "pure" and the hybrid are both products of the social process of classification—which, since Boas and Durkheim, has been of enduring concern to folklorists and anthropologists.

In contrast to Stross, John D. Dorst focuses less on the power of the metaphor of hybridity than on its limitations in certain contexts. "Which Came First, the Chicken Device or the Textual Egg? Documentary Film and the Limits of the Hybrid Metaphor" takes as its main example the highly self-referential films of Errol Morris. These Dorst sees as featuring a kind of mixture of logical types (i.e., a conflation of text and text-producing device) that is less illuminated by the metaphor of hybridity than by that of the Möbius strip or the proverbial chicken and egg. Coming as they do from a folklorist known for his pioneering work in Bakhtinian-inspired analysis (Dorst 1983), Dorst's cautions regarding indiscriminate use of the metaphor of hybridity are particularly notable.

Part 2 offers a variety of perspectives on hybrid discourses and the politics of identity. In "The African Diaspora: Toward an Ethnography of Diasporic Identification," Edmund T. Gordon and Mark Anderson assess and move beyond two polarized models of diasporic identity: "the mystical essentialism of Afrocentric notions of the African diaspora," on the one hand, "and the celebratory pluralism of hybrid notions of diaspora," on the other (this issue:288). Inspired by Paul Gilroy's attempt to navigate between these two poles but unsatisfied with Gilroy's privileging of elitist constructions of identity, Gordon and Anderson issue a call for a far-reaching ethnography of diasporic identification. Drawing on Gordon's research among Creoles in Nicaragua and Anderson's among Garifunas in Honduras, their article offers a brief illustration of what such a multisited ethnographic enterprise would entail.

Gordon and Anderson share their uneasiness with the discourse of hybridity with Nicholas Thomas, who has remarked that "hybridity is almost a good idea, but not quite" (1996:9). Thomas offers several reasons for his qualified assessment, most notably that hybridity is not everyone's project (see also Strong and Van Winkle 1996). In a similar vein, Charles R. Hale's "Travel Warning: Elite Appropriations of Hybridity, *Mestizaje*, Antiracism, Equality, and Other Progressive-Sounding Discourses in Highland Guatemala" calls for highly localized analyses of the deployment of, and opposition to, the discourse of hybridity. Treating the discourse of hybridity as a deceptive, even dangerous form of what Said and others have called "traveling theory," Hale demonstrates that in some contexts this discourse may serve to reinforce power relations and exclusions rather than to contest and subvert them. By focusing on appropriation, Hale's article may also remind us that analyses couched in terms of hybridity may obscure more coercive forms of cultural mixture (see also Ziff and Rao 1997).

The third article in part 2, César Augusto Salgado's "Hybridity in New World Baroque Theory," contrasts with Hale's in focusing on the role that theorizing the hybrid has played not in legitimizing power relations in Latin America but in legitimizing a distinct form of Latin American alterity vis-à-vis Europe. Taking as his subject 20th-century "neobaroque" criticism of the art, literature, and architecture produced in colonial Latin America, Salgado discusses how New World baroque style is conceptualized as the result of hybridizing strategies on the part of creole, mestizo, and indigenous artists and authors. Read together, Hale's and Salgado's articles impart a sense of both the complexity and the longevity of hybridizing strategies in Latin America. So, too, does Mariah Wade's "Go-Between: The Roles of Native American Women and Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca in Southern Texas in the 16th Century." Wade's reading of Cabeza de Vaca's narrative of what is sometimes called his "captivity" among indigenous peoples stresses the assumption of a hybrid identity by the shipwrecked Spaniard—one in which he successively adopts the mediating roles of healer and trader as well as the subordinate role of a slave performing women's work. Wade, an archaeologist utilizing the hybrid methodology of ethnohistory, retells Cabeza de Vaca's story in order to reflect on the process of becoming hybrid—which she, with Taussig, understands as dancing between the same and the different.

The final article in this section also concerns hybridizing strategies—in this case those employed by the African American folklorist Zora Neale Hurston. In "'He can read my writing but he sho' can't read my mind': Zora Neale Hurston's *Revenge* in *Mules and Men*," Keith Walters offers an innovative interpretation of this work as a hybrid of trickster tale and ethnography of communication. In other words, Walters reads Hurston's writing as simultaneously an analysis of the African American practice known as "signifying" and an enactment of that very process. Beyond this, Walters offers his own reading practice as an enactment of hybridity, one that brings together his embodied experience as a working-class white southerner and his academic background as a linguist researching and teaching about African American speech communities. His reflection on his own reading practice is a commentary on the limitations of hybridity at the same time as his analysis illustrates the power of hybridity as a strategy of critique and interpretation.

Part 3 shifts our attention from discourses and identities to material forms. "Conjuring in the Big House Kitchen: An Interpretation of African American Belief Systems" is somewhat similar to the preceding article in employing what the authors, archaeologist Mark P. Leone and folklorist Gladys-Marie Fry, call a "hybrid method" to analyze caches of crystals and other small objects hidden in plantation houses in Maryland and slave quarters in Virginia. Their hybrid method of reading the contents and locations of the caches against slave narratives led Leone and Fry to novel interpretations: they came to see the plantations of Virginia and, more dramatically, the master's houses of Maryland as "hybrid environments" in which West African conjuring was practiced as an everyday form of resistance to the physical and spiritual oppression of slavery. The unsynthesized nature of conjuring materials and practices may indicate to skeptical readers that hybridity is not simply syncretism renamed but a metaphor that encompasses a broader range of cultural mixtures.

The next author, James Denbow, is also concerned with what he describes as “material traces of accommodation, resistance, and change” (this issue:419) among African peoples living under European domination. Denbow’s “Heart and Soul: Glimpses of Ideology and Cosmology in the Iconography of Tombstones from the Loango Coast of Central Africa” analyzes the juxtaposition of Kongo and Christian symbols on tombstones dating to the early 20th century.

The author of the third article concerned with material forms, Andrew Causey, finds the metaphor of hybridity less useful. In “The *Singasinga* Table Lamp and the Toba Batak Art of Conflation,” Causey analyzes innovations in Indonesian tourist art—in particular, a remarkable but unmarketable candelabra. Causey finds the concept of “conflation” more appropriate than “hybridity” because it allows him to conceptualize innovations in intention and use as well as in material form. While other contributors such as Brian Stross stress that the trope of hybridity calls attention to creativity, Causey favors “conflation” for its evocation of agency (i.e., one agent “blows together” two or more disparate elements). Interestingly enough, *conflation* is also a term John Dorst finds congenial when describing postmodern mixtures of text and device. This is not to suggest, to be sure, that *conflation* is likely to take the place of *hybridity* in cultural analysis but to underscore that, as Dorst points out, while any trope “productively enables thought in many directions, it limits it in others. It has a threshold at which it begins to clarify our vision less and cloud it more” (this issue:269–270). This is equally true of cultural convergences, coalescences, fusions, and what Socolov (n.d.) has termed cultural “graftings,” a concept that lifts the terms for cultural creativity out of the realm of the biological while still adhering to an organic metaphor.

The examination of performance lends itself to the hybrid metaphor in much the same way studies of material culture do. In “*Fantasia* and Disobedient Daughters: Undistressing Genres and Reinventing Traditions in the Mexican American *Carpa*,” Peter C. Haney presents hybridity as a metaphor that illuminates the social processes through which boundaries are constructed and deconstructed. His analysis of the Mexican American tent shows as a hybrid of *folklórico* (nationalist dance) and burlesque is concerned with subversions and reinscriptions of the boundaries of class, nationality, and gender in particular. As in the example of Causey’s Indonesian candelabra, the process of commodification is revealed here as a particularly powerful context for innovation.

Amy Horowitz’s “Israeli Mediterranean Music: Straddling Disputed Territories” contrasts sharply with Causey’s article in considering hybridity superior to alternative metaphors (e.g., diffusion and creolization) precisely because it calls attention to intentionality. Nevertheless, Horowitz borrows the more vivid metaphor of “straddling” to discuss the precarious position of Mizrahi music and musicians in Israel (the Mizrahim are Jews of North African and Middle Eastern ancestry). Technology plays a major role in Horowitz’s story: it is the cassette tape recorder that allows Mizrahi music to circulate widely in Israel and thus to challenge Ashkenazi (European Jewish) cultural and political hegemony.

The final author, David Samuels, goes back to the older trope of syncretism as a useful foil for emphasizing the cultural potential of hybridity. Samuels does this for two reasons: hybridity calls attention to disjunctions as well as conjunctions, and it

encourages a focus not on structure but on practice, or what Samuels refers to as “radically local experience.” At the same time Samuels critiques what he calls a philological approach to hybridity, that is, a concern with “heritage” and “persistence” that he identifies with an outsider’s perspective. “The Whole and the Sum of the Parts, or, How Cookie and the Cupcakes Told the Story of Apache History in San Carlos” offers the perspective of a participant-observer in an Apache rock and roll band, one who became convinced that the apparent disjunction between Apache music and rock and roll exists only in the outsider’s perspective. Samuels’s closing realization—“who am I to say that this is somebody else’s music” (this issue:472)—was among the most memorable statements made at the conference and underscores the limits of any kind of theorizing—including theorizing the hybrid.

The articles in this issue address a trichotomy of hybridities that are analytically distinct, however much they overlap in social life. In the first place, all of the authors are concerned with social and cultural realities in which some kind of creative or subversive mixture is evident. A second level of analysis concerns concepts of mixture and border crossing found in everyday discourse, including such highly fraught terms as *mixed blood*, *mestizo*, *mulatta*, and *creole*. A third level involves the tropes deployed by theorists in analyzing cultural mixture, which tend to build on tropes already found in social life.¹⁰ These levels of hybridity are related to each other in complex ways that the contributors to this issue help to illuminate. While the authors disagree as to the appropriateness and usefulness of hybridity as an analytic trope, all analyze particular processes of cultural mixture and border crossing in original and insightful ways.

Notes

Although they were not able to contribute to this special issue, the editors are grateful to the following scholars for presenting papers at the conference and contributing to our discussions: Mervin Alleyne, John Borneman, Marilyn Ivy, Persis Karim, Benjamin Lee, José Limón, Hamid Naficy, Kirin Narayan, Manuel Peña, Jane Phillips-Conroy, Charles Ramirez-Berg, Robert Blair St. George, Lisa Sanchez-Gonzalez, Suzanne Seriff, Emily Socolov, Sandy Stone, Bonnie Urciuoli, and Barrik Van Winkle. That the conference participants find their disciplinary homes in American studies, communications, comparative literature, English, linguistics, media studies, Mexican American studies, and Spanish and Portuguese as well as folklore and all four subfields of anthropology indicates the extent to which the conference enacted as well as analyzed hybrid genres.

Both the conference and the articles presented in this issue were enriched by the perceptive commentary of the main discussant, Fred Myers, as well as by that of the editors’ colleagues at the University of Texas at Austin, including Henry Selby, Kathleen Stewart, Kamala Visweswaran, Samuel Wilson, and Nabeel Zuberi. James Brow, John Downing, Manuel Peña, and Joel Sherzer chaired panels and offered essential financial and logistical support from the Department of Anthropology; the Department of Radio, Television, and Film; and the Center for Intercultural Studies in Folklore and Ethnomusicology. Joel Sherzer deserves special thanks for his enthusiastic support of the conference and his help in obtaining funding from additional university sources, including the College of Liberal Arts; the Department of Comparative Literature; the Department of Asian Studies; the Institute for Latin American Studies; and the Centers for African and African American Studies, American History, Mexican American Studies, Mexican Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, and Russian, Eastern European, and Eurasian Studies. It is perhaps fitting that the funding for this conference was as hybrid as its substance.

¹The editorial voice of this introduction is equally hybrid. We approached this project with rather different concerns and perspectives. Kapchan’s are represented in the first two sections (“Hybridity Past and Present” and “Forms of Hybridization”), which are revised versions of her opening remarks at the

conference. Strong wrote the third section ("Under the Sign of Hybridity") and has published an expanded version of her contribution to the conference elsewhere (Strong and Van Winkle 1996). Just as neither one of us necessarily shares the views expressed by the other, neither do the authors necessarily agree with how we have framed their work. This is a multivocal issue that invites the reader to engage in an ongoing debate.

²Van Winkle's presentation, coauthored by Pauline Turner Strong, was an adaptation of an article published elsewhere on the essentializing trope of "Indian blood" (Strong and Van Winkle 1996).

³As Lévi-Strauss writes,

More rapid cross-references, together with an increase in the number of points of view and angles of approach have made it possible to consolidate into a whole what might at first have seemed to be a loose and precarious assemblage of odds and ends, all dissimilar in form, texture and color. Careful stitching and darning, systematically applied to reinforce weak spots, has finally produced a homogeneous fabric, clear in outline and harmonious in its blend of shades; fragments which at first seemed disparate, once they found their appropriate place and the correct relationship to their neighbors, come together to form a coherent picture. In this picture, the tiniest details, however gratuitous, bizarre, and even absurd they may have seemed at the beginning, acquire both meaning and function. [1971:562]

⁴Following Morson (who himself follows Bakhtin), Hanks (1987) identifies these colonial texts as "boundary works," available to be read in two often contradictory systems.

⁵Bourdieu accounts for the process of change in the expressive economy this way: he says that

whenever the adjustment between structures and dispositions is broken, the transformation of the generative schemes is doubtless reinforced and accelerated by the dialectic between the schemes immanent in practice and the norms produced by a reflection on practices, which impose *new meanings* on them by reference to *alien structures*. [1977:20, emphasis added]

⁶This hybrid genre arises, as Haring (1992) suggests hybrid genres do, in a moment of historical tension. Also, Hanks writes, "Because they are at least partly created in their enactment, then, genres are schematic and incomplete resources on which speakers necessarily improvise in practice" (1987:681).

⁷Discussing the power of liminal spaces like markets in the medieval European imagination, Stallybrass and White have noted that "discursive space is never completely independent of social place and the formation of new kinds of speech can be traced through the emergence of new public sites of discourse and the transformation of old ones" (1986:80).

⁸In this, his discussions are reminiscent of those of Burgat and Dowell (1997), who, in discussing fundamentalisms in North Africa, note that the plurality of North African citizens lies not only in their polylingualism (speaking Arabic, French, and often Berber, Spanish, and English as well) but in their socialization in a sacred society and their education in secularity, what some Arab intellectuals refer to as the debate between tradition and modernity (al-Jabri 1999). Such an inheritance, they assert, holds the potential for promising creativity in the political sphere, if it does not degenerate into social schizophrenia.

⁹Rosaldo criticizes Canclini for representing "the modern sphere [as] a different historical epoch than the traditional" (Rosaldo 1995:xiv), yet Canclini listens closely to the voices that describe experiences of "multitemporal heterogeneity" (Canclini 1995:3). Whereas the categories of "tradition" and "modernity" may be more analytical than empirical in Canclini's work, we may also say that they are phenomenological: structures of feeling that make for all the difference in cultural and political economies.

¹⁰For this observation we are indebted to Joel Sherzer, who recalled that Richard Bauman has made a similar point about the trope of the "borderland."

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