

Regarding Hybridity

By L.C.

For millennia, now, Western society has been built upon pillars of subjugations and through the delineation of very precise divisive ideas, concepts and assumptions. It is, indeed, remarkable to see how much it has been able to grow from these artificial binary constructs. However, in spite of this very real growth, the West is still subject to this line of thinking and, unsurprisingly, struggles to find bridges to build and connect with other cultures, which differ from the “status quo” it has grown deeply accustomed to. It should come as no surprise, then, to see these other cultures trying to deduce where the problem stems from. Such is the case with Homi K. Bhabha’s collection of essays: “*The location of Culture*” (1994). In this end-of-the-millennium assemblage, one of the key concepts scrutinized is that of “**Hybridity**” and, to be more specific, that of “**Cultural Hybridity**”.

First, it is imperative to define its meaning: Hybridity can be explained as the blending of two different points of view and can also be interpreted as the “in-betweenness” betwixt the two groups. The “interstices” (Bhabha, 1994) that birth from this meeting allow the individual to redefine their own subjectivity (i.e. the way one perceives themselves in a societal context). It is also important to note that Hybridity assumes varying forms (e.g. linguistical, political, etc.) and, most notably, it is the bridge which connects two cultures. In a postcolonial perspective, it is, therefore, the bridge connecting the *colonizer/colonized* dichotomy.

And if identity is defined by the interaction between the former and the latter, the result of this encounter can be observed in Amitav Ghosh’s “*The Nutmeg’s Curse*” (2021). In the early pages of the eco-critical essay, a magnifying glass is cast upon those interactions that had arisen between the European settler and the enslaved ethnicities of Africa and India. In the face of adversity, the colonized have been able to face and endure the unimaginable cruelty perpetrated by the hands of the Westerner. “How must it feel”, asks Ghosh, “to find yourself face-to-face with someone who [wants to] bring your world to an end?” (page 6). The answer is through hybridization, through the entangled messes which surface among the two cultures. Only by acknowledging those spaces that lie in the overlap of the two Venn diagrams.

To conclude, Hybridity can be seen in one of two possible ways. As a confounding, frightening concept, one to be afraid of and to shy away from, one to subjugate and to keep at a distance, much like how the Europeans once did. Or, alternatively, as a tangible, real-world solution to how the advent of colonialism has shaped both identity and society and how it can continue to do so in the coming future.