

# Hybridity



Hybridity:  
Forms and Figures in Literature  
and the Visual Arts

Edited by

Vanessa Guignery,  
Catherine Pessa-Miquel and François Specq

**CAMBRIDGE**  
**SCHOLARS**  

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**P U B L I S H I N G**

Hybridity: Forms and Figures in Literature and the Visual Arts,  
Edited by Vanessa Guignery, Catherine Pesso-Miquel and François Specq

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# INTRODUCTION

## HYBRIDITY, WHY IT STILL MATTERS

VANESSA GUIGNERY

(ÉCOLE NORMALE SUPÉRIEURE DE LYON)

“Hybridity is [...] itself a hybrid concept” (21), according to Robert Young in *Colonial Desire. Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (2005). Over the last two decades, the unstable notion of hybridity has been the focus of a number of debates and has given rise to many publications.<sup>1</sup> The term, which is often discussed in connection with such notions as *métissage*, creolization, syncretism, diaspora, transculturation and in-betweenness, has become a buzzword in cultural and literary studies, and is at times used carelessly to describe a disparate body of subjects in widely differing domains. The concept is widespread in the English-speaking sphere (Great Britain, North America, and the postcolonial world), but is also relevant in the context of literatures in French, Spanish and Portuguese (from Latin America and the Caribbean in particular), which accounts for its extensive development. The aim of this volume is to focus on the notion of hybridity and form a critical assessment of its scope, significance and role in literature and the visual arts, while trying to avoid on the one hand broad-brush definitions which may lead to a proliferation of meanings and the trivialising of the concept, and on the other hand, any tendency to essentialize it. Our contributors propose to examine the development and various manifestations of the concept as a principle held in contempt by the partisans of racial purity, a process enthusiastically promoted by adepts of mixing and syncretism, but also a notion viewed with suspicion by those who decry its multifarious and triumphalist dimensions and its lack of political roots. These three general stances have given rise to theoretical developments as well as literary and artistic creations which are analysed in this present volume.

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<sup>1</sup> See the selective bibliography below.

The word “hybridity” has its origins in biology and botany where it designates a crossing between two species by cross-pollination that gives birth to a third “hybrid” species. While Darwin praised the fertility of the process of cross-pollination, others pointed to the risk of degeneration when the term was applied to the field of genetics and racial interbreeding. Technically speaking, the product of zoological hybridization is often a sterile animal, but the term is often used metaphorically to designate creativity, the creation of new specimens. In the Victorian period, when different races were identified with species, but also in the essentialist colonial and national discourses that defended a myth of purity, the concept of hybridity found itself the subject of attacks tarnished with racial and racist connotations. According to Anjali Prabhu in *Hybridity. Limits, Transformations, Prospects* (2007), hybridity is “a colonial concept” and “first and foremost a ‘racial’ term” (xii). The term “miscegenation” for instance, used mainly in the nineteenth century to refer to people of mixed blood—the mongrel, *mulatto*, *mestizo*, *métis*, half-caste, etc.—was loaded with negative connotations and viewed as “subversive of the foundations of empire and race” (Nederveen Pieterse 1989: 361). Several chapters in this volume take this stance into consideration and examine the ways in which the question of hybridity may confer a political and ethical dimension on literary and artistic works.

In the twentieth century, the term hybridity extended beyond the biological and racial framework to embrace linguistic and cultural areas. Mikhail Bakhtin in particular developed a linguistic version of hybridity that was related to the concepts of polyphony, dialogism and heteroglossia. For Bakhtin, the process of hybridization—hybridization is the dynamic on-going process while hybridity is the end result—entails the combination of two languages and undermines the notion of a monological authoritative discourse:

What is hybridization? It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor. (358)

Bakhtin further distinguishes between intentional and unintentional hybridity. In the case of the former, discourse is double-voiced and one voice deliberately ironizes and unmasks the other within the same utterance: “Intentional semantic hybrids are inevitably internally dialogic [...]. Two points of view are not mixed, but set against each other dialogically” (360); thus authoritative discourse is undone, which has

social and political implications. In the case of unconscious or organic hybridity, “the mixture remains mute and opaque, never making use of conscious contrasts and oppositions” (360). According to Robert Young, intentional hybridity “enables a contestatory activity, a politicized setting of cultural differences against each other dialogically” (22) while unconscious hybridity tends towards fusion and can therefore be related to the concept of creolization or *métissage*, “the imperceptible process whereby two or more cultures merge into a new mode” (21). It is because of that “antithetical movement of coalescence and antagonism” that Young asserts that hybridity “is itself an example of hybridity, of a doubleness that both brings together, fuses, but also maintains separation” (22). The encounters and mixtures triggered off by hybrid processes open up new perspectives on the world and result in artistic forms which can combine different styles, languages, modes and genres. Several chapters in this volume examine how modes of writing can be affected or not by intercultural processes: language is sometimes transformed and becomes hybrid and polyphonic (as in Derek Walcott’s or Salman Rushdie’s work, for instance), while in other cases, writers employ a variety of strategies to find their place within the “dominant” language (this may be the case of Chinua Achebe).

At the instigation of Homi Bhabha (who was himself inspired by writers such as Salman Rushdie or Toni Morrison), postcolonial theory adopted the idea of hybridity to designate the transcultural forms that resulted from linguistic, political or ethnic intermixing, and to challenge the existing hierarchies, polarities, binarisms and symmetries (East/West, black/white, coloniser/colonised, majority/minority, self/other, interior/exterior...). Other critics, such as Robert Young, Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, Iain Chambers or James Clifford, followed suit. Hybridity stands in opposition to the myth of purity and racial and cultural authenticity, of fixed and essentialist identity, embraces blending, combining, syncretism and encourages the composite, the impure, the heterogeneous and the eclectic. In *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), Rushdie describes his novel *The Satanic Verses* (1988) in a way which offers an interesting perspective on the concept of hybridity:

*The Satanic Verses* celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. *Mélange*, hotch-potch, a bit of this and a bit of that is *how newness enters the world*. It is the great possibility that mass-migration gives the world, and I have tried to embrace it. *The*

*Satanic Verses* is for change-by-fusion, change-by-conjoining. It is a love-song to our mongrel selves. (1991: 394)

Rushdie here points to the operation of blending, fusion or coalescence which overturns both binary structures and the mistaken belief in an idealised form of purity. The writer argues that India in particular, with its multiplicity of languages, religions and cultures, is marked by a tradition of hybridity and plurality:

[...] it is completely fallacious to suppose that there is such a thing as a pure, unalloyed tradition from which to draw. [...] the very essence of Indian culture is that we possess a mixed tradition, a *mélange* of elements as disparate as ancient Mughal and contemporary Coca-Cola American. [...] Eclecticism, the ability to take from the world what seems fitting and to leave the rest, has always been a hallmark of the Indian tradition. (1991: 67).

Because there is no such thing as an original purity before fusion, Paul Gilroy for his part objects to the use of the term “hybridity”: “The idea of hybridity, or intermixture, presupposes two anterior purities. [...] I think there isn’t any purity; there isn’t any anterior purity [...] that’s why I try not to use the word hybrid” (1994: 54-55). Gilroy further laments the “lack of a means of adequately describing, let alone theorizing, intermixture, fusion and syncretism, without suggesting the existence of anterior ‘uncontaminated’ purities” (2000: 250). The issue of vocabulary is certainly problematic and the writers of the essays contained in this volume are all aware of the debatable and controversial dimension of the term “hybridity”.

As mentioned above, hybridity is very much a concept set within the postcolonial context. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin argue that “hybridity and the power it releases may well be seen as the characteristic feature and contribution of the post-colonial, allowing a means of evading the replication of the binary categories of the past and developing new anti-monolithic models of cultural exchange and growth” (1995: 183), and they view hybridity as “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonisation” (118). Hybridity presents itself as an alternative discourse that subverts the very idea of a dominant culture and a unique canon, and invites a re-examination of power structures. For Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994), hybridity is a “disruptive and productive category” (Hutnyk 81) which shifts power, questions discursive authority and suggests that colonial discourse is never wholly in

control of the colonizer. Dominating discourses are thus revealed to be fractured, which opens the ground for their subversion:

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities, it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the 'pure' and original identity of authority). Hybridity [...] displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. (Bhabha 112)

The discourse of colonial authority is revealed to be double-voiced rather than monological as it inscribes the very trace of the Other. For Bhabha, cultural differences are not synthesized into a new third term but continue to exist in a hybrid "Third Space of enunciation" (37), a zone of exchange and negotiation. Bhabha thus resituates the monolithic categories of race, class and gender in terms of borderlines, crossings, in-between spaces, interstices, splits and joins, and proposes to find the location of culture by focusing on that border area, that liminal, in-between space.

The concept of hybridity is intrinsically linked to the notion of identity for multi-cultural individuals, migrants and diasporic communities, and the present volume analyses the ways in which literary and artistic works represent people of multiple identities and mixed origins who experience their hybridity with more or less serenity and whom society welcomes with varying degrees of benevolence. These "in-between" people or hyphenated communities occupy a displaced position which can provoke a sense of fragmentation, dislocation and discontinuity, both in terms of space and time. As suggested by Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic* (1993), they have no secure roots any more which could fix them in place, in a nation or an ethnic group; instead, they travel along contingent cultural routes which can take them imaginatively or physically to different places and into contact with many different people.

As this volume covers several centuries, it also examines to what extent the issues and the forms of hybridity have evolved over time: can we, should we, consider the concept of hybridity differently according to whether we analyse the work of such canonical writers as Daniel Defoe, Robert Louis Stevenson, Thomas De Quincey and Victor Hugo, contemporary African-American or British authors, Neo-Victorian fiction or the post-colonial literatures of a globalised world? In a world where the notion of borders and national identity are constantly being redefined, certain commentators have indeed seen hybridity as a cultural effect of globalisation (a concept which is itself protean). It seems necessary to reflect on the meanings of the word "hybridity" in a globalised world that

tends to erase and homogenise differences and local inscriptions, but in which particularisms and parochialism are insidiously gaining headway, notably through a return to essentialized identities, communitarian attitudes and/or religious fundamentalisms that insist on the unicity, the purity and the integrity of identities and cultivate endogamy and the rejection of the Other. In Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), Aurora, whose paintings overflow with heterogeneity, ominously predicts the doom of hybrids and mongrels in an end-of-millennium world plagued with violent religious conflicts: "imitations of life, Historical anomalies! Centaurs... Will you not be blownoffied to bits by the coming storms? Mixtures, mongrels, ghost-dancers, shadows! Bad times are coming, darlings" (171).

Global capitalism and cultural standardisation also open up the risk of a "flattening of differences" or an "equalization of cultures" (Hutnyk 95-96). In *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (1995), Néstor García Canclini had already argued:

When hybridization is the mixing of elements from many diverse societies whose peoples are seen as sets of potential consumers of a global product, the process that in music is called equalization tends to be applied to the differences between cultures. (47)

Hybridity therefore has to defend its ground as an active, dynamic process of interactions between relational cultures. It also has to repeatedly prove its validity in the face of "anti-hybridity backlash" (Nederveen Pieterse 2001: 221) which argues that the concept is trivial, without roots and reserved for the diasporic members of the metropolitan elite while the subaltern remains occluded, a "triumphalist hybridism" which oils the wheels of "the ideological state apparatus" according to Gayatri Spivak (319n). The concept therefore demands that one should repeatedly question and challenge its critical significance, to try and validate it anew, by demonstrating why it still matters: a difficult but stimulating task which the contributors to this volume have undertaken.

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**PART I:**  
**HYBRIDIZING ENGLISHNESS**

## CHAPTER ONE

# HYBRIDITY, LEGITIMACY AND IDENTITY IN THE WRITINGS OF DANIEL DEFOE

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### Abstract

In *The True-Born Englishman* (1700), Daniel Defoe dismisses the idea that nationalism can be based on ethnic purity and proffers a new construction of Englishness through a reevaluation of the notions of legitimacy and individual identity. What he does here to counter opponents to William III is also to be found in his other fictional or non-fictional writings in which he destroys the traditional association of mixed blood with Satanic or subversive forces, in order to show that an individual's true identity does not lie in his direct genealogical line. In the wake of the Glorious Revolution in 1688 the related themes of legitimacy in politics and identity in literature partake of the same reflection on both inner worth and social value in a way that legitimates social mobility.

Daniel Defoe is now mainly known as the author of *Robinson Crusoe*. Yet at the beginning of the eighteenth century he would sign his texts as “the author of *The True-Born Englishman*”, referring to a pamphlet he had published in 1700 as an answer to John Tutchin's lampoon, *The Foreigners*, which reflected the growing dissatisfaction with William III. The king was Dutch and England was starting to resent being ruled by a foreigner. Tutchin's text was widely read and acclaimed, which infuriated Defoe who was a staunch supporter of William of Orange. *The True Born Englishman*, though very little known nowadays, is a fascinating text that seeks to counter xenophobia so as to help legitimize William III. By calling the English a hybrid people (“a mongrel half-bred race” [Defoe 2003b: 94]), Daniel Defoe dismisses the idea that national consciousness can be based on ethnic purity and proffers a new construction of

Englishness through its hybrid characteristics. As a consequence, he forces a reevaluation of the notions of authority or sovereignty, i.e. legitimacy, through his invention of the concept of nation which he tries to delineate without the help of a shared genealogy. What he does here for political purposes echoes the way he counters the traditional (Biblical and Miltonic) association of illegitimacy with Satanic or subversive forces (Schmidgen 135) in his fiction, in order to show that an individual's true worth does not lie in his direct genealogical line. In the wake of the Glorious Revolution in 1688, legitimacy in politics and identity in literature appear to be related themes that partake of a new construction of individual and national identity.

When in 1688 Catholic James II had a baby son by his second wife many Tories joined the Whigs in sending a formal invitation to Protestant William of Orange, husband to James II's eldest daughter Mary, to prevent an unwanted Catholic dynasty in England. William landed in Torbay in 1688, avowedly to safeguard the Protestant interests in England. Both Mary and William were crowned as joint sovereigns when James had fled to France: by allowing Parliament to invite William over, the bloodless revolution marks a forceful stage in the demise of the divine right of kings. Nevertheless, as early as 1688, there seems to have been some grumbling in England about having a foreign king. Indeed, Parliament debated the possibility of crowning Mary and letting William be a prince consort, which both William and Mary refused. Actually, the two sovereigns were widely acclaimed as the saviours of England's Protestantism, yet the arrival of Dutch followers and courtiers did not please the English very much, all the more so as it was felt that William took more pains at ruling his lands in Holland than at managing Britain with his wife. Moreover he was resented for giving land and titles to his Dutch companions. As a result the English peers felt downgraded and took it ill that those they considered as foreign upstarts should become the new nobility. When the journalist John Tutchin wrote his scathing pamphlet, *The Foreigners*, in which he draws a parallel between ancient Israel and England in the same way as Dryden had done in his *Absalom and Achitophel* (Owens 16), he clearly voiced popular discontent. The pamphlet first sets the scene:

Long time had Israel been disused from rest  
 Long had they been by tyrants oppressed [...]  
 To foreign nations next they have recourse [...]  
 Striving to mend, they made their state much worse. [...]  
 To foreign courts and councils do resort,  
 To find a king their freedom to support.

Tutchin then accuses William and his followers of being “crafty knaves” and “upstart foreigners”, and, “in combination with a foreign brood”, of plundering England’s riches and waging long and costly wars: “Like beasts of prey they ravage all the land/acquire preferments, and usurp command”. “These are the vermin do our state molest/eclipse our glory, and disturb our rest”. In Tutchin’s description, William is no longer the long expected saviour.

Daniel Defoe had a deep aversion for Catholicism and heartily supported the coronation of William and Mary who were Protestant. In *An Appeal to Honour and Justice* (1715), Defoe is quite clear about his defiance of James II and actively participated in the Allegiance controversy that opposed Jacobites, i.e. pro-James, and revolution men, i.e. supporters of William. Repeatedly he rebuked England for ungratefully expressing discontent against William. This is clear in his *A New Discovery of an old Intreague* (1691), where the conclusion says:

Great *Nassau* from his envied throne looked down,  
And viewed their busy malice with a frown.  
Their impotent fury viewed with just disdain.  
*And asked if he has saved them all in vain?* (Defoe 2003a: 56)

He took up the same themes in *An Encomium upon Parliament* (1699) and in *The Pacificator* (1700).

Daniel Defoe quickly responded to Tutchin’s text. As often with Defoe one could have expected religious and economic arguments in *The True-Born Englishman*. This staunch chauvinist, always expressing his pride in England and his belief in the superiority of his country over the rest of Europe, showed his interest for foreign manpower in almost all his written production: his fiction and nonfiction stage foreigners that assimilate very well and thrive (Statt 299) or show the advantages of immigration (Statt 293) that Defoe thought was a good means to expand the population, particularly after the plague, and thus strengthen the country. Defoe’s answer to Tutchin however is much more interesting than all his other writings on foreigners and immigration in that he strives to undermine xenophobic and jealous reactions, which results in a striking definition of Englishness. Indeed Defoe offers a reading of the past that insists on the absence of common roots as England according to him derives from miscegenation of foreign immigrants: “Thus from a mixture of all kinds began,/That heterogeneous thing, an Englishman” (Defoe 2003b: 94). Further down he adds:

A true-born Englishman's a contradiction,  
 In speech an irony, in fact a fiction  
 A banter made to be a test of fools,  
 Which those that use it justly ridicules;  
 A metaphor intended to express  
 A man a-kin to all the universe. (Defoe 2003b: 95)

As a spontaneous conclusion then, all rejection of the king on the ground of his being foreign does not make sense.

Moreover, not only does he repeatedly show that the idea of a collective ethnic identity is unfounded, but he also explains that the immigrants who came to England and who were the ancestors of the present Englishmen were the dregs of England's neighbouring countries, "Norwegian Pirates, buccaneering Danes", "Treacherous Scots" (Defoe 2003b: 90).

From this amphibious, ill-born mob began  
 That vain ill-natured thing, an Englishman [...]  
 These are the heroes that despise the Dutch,  
 And rail at new-come foreigners so much; (Defoe 2003b: 90-91)

Hybridity is neither problematic nor offensive for Defoe: faced with shocked reactions he felt the need to explain he never wished to be disparaging. Not only did he mean to attack ill-founded pride only and, by implying that the present nobility had no peculiarly admirable origins to be proud of, to show the ridicule of those who speak against the new-made Dutch Lords. But above all, Defoe insisted that such mixture is the essence of England's pride, perhaps because the climate and the blending do create a new type of person: the Englishman.

Where in but half a common age of time  
 Borrowing new blood and manners from the clime  
 Proudly they learn all mankind to contemn (Defoe 2003b: 92)

His recurrent contention indeed is that England is both rich and admirable thanks to its mixed pedigree—only blameable because it can feel no gratitude, an attitude he thinks is due to ill-grounded pride in one's origins. It is as if he tried to differentiate origins and identity. One might have expected an insistence on Protestantism to define Englishness, but evidently it would not be sufficiently creative of cohesiveness when Protestant Hanover was involved. As ethnicity is ruled out, Daniel Defoe acts as if ingratitude were the essential common characteristic of the English, in the same way as he writes about other countries' usual national

stereotypes, e.g. that the French are “A dancing Nation, fickle and untrue”. This is clearly a way, though decidedly unusual, to define Englishness against foreigners—including the Scots and the Welsh, a “them” and an “us”, as Defoe here is concerned with Englishness, and not Britishness, since he writes before the treaty of Union between England and Scotland signed in 1707. As if he paid lip-service to the fact that it is commonplace to root a sense of national consciousness in a construction and understanding of difference (Wilson 4), Defoe does endeavour to make out distinctive English features somewhat contentiously. Yet he spells out his opinion on hybridity in his Explanatory Preface to *The True-Born Englishman*: “Had we been an unmixed nation, I am of opinion it had been to our disadvantage [...] Those nations which are most mixed are the best, and have least of barbarism and brutality among them”. This he facetiously develops in Part II:

Fierce as the Briton, as the Roman brave, [...]  
The Pict has made them sour, the Dane morose,  
False from the Scot, and from the Norman worse,  
What honesty they have, the Saxon gave them. (Defoe 2003b: 97)

It is multiplicity and plurality that make England a more glorious, resplendent country, Defoe proudly says, meaning that the combination resulting from hybridity is productive of strength, creativity and courage in the English. It is as if he was suggesting what post-colonial theory refers to as in-betweenness, though refusing to consider any difference between foreign, colonizing powers and local, colonized collectivity, but implying clearly that England is the produce of several successive colonizations. Interestingly, such imagery seems to go along with the arguments used by William’s opponents who meant to fight what they considered as colonization by the Dutch, dealing through their attacks against William indirectly with issues of sovereignty and national identity.

Defoe says little in positive defence of the king, though as the text reads as a satire about English ingratitude, it implies that William deserves respect. But more interestingly it insists that the idea of a collective ethnic identity is non historical and that refusing a sovereign under the pretext that he is a foreigner does not make sense. What is striking is that Defoe should evade the issue of the relationship between nation and sovereignty though it seems to be quite a challenge to try to establish the legitimacy of sovereignty without appealing to a common, immemorial idea of the nation. Whereas sovereignty traditionally establishes its legitimacy on long-lasting historical roots, he insists on the paradox that Englishness

does exist but is based on no continuity, no common history: his achievement is to legitimize William by inventing a concept of nationhood that is not rooted in one common past but is based on hybridity, appealing to a form of cultural collectivity that is based on fragmentation, doing so in a poem that itself is hybrid: it reads both as a satire in heroic couplets and as a ballad, with a refrain: “And all their race are true-born Englishman” (Owens 21).

Trying to define nationhood by insisting on difference and pluralism rather than common identity is unusual. Such a stance however is also obvious in other works by Defoe, such as the *Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain* that he published between 1724 and 1727 in the form of letters sent to a correspondent and that serves as a reference book to historians of eighteenth-century England because of its descriptions of the geographical, economic and demographic characteristics of the country. “The book deploys the resources available to a great imaginative writer, and it supplies less a picture of Britain than a vision of nationhood” (Roger 153). This vision of nationhood is based on the idea that national identity is not fixed but in progress, and very obviously Defoe’s attempt at conveying to his readers this sense of progressive identity was highly successful if one judges from the success both of the *Tour* and of *The True-Born Englishman*. It is clear that the wide popularity of this pamphlet drew people together in a sentiment of national community in the same way as the process described by Benedict Anderson: journalistic print culture played a part in the rise of nationalistic discourse, as such texts use topicality and the feeling of a common present in order to create a “community in anonymity” (Schellenberg 296). The feeling of common identity which thus emerges is supported by the link created between all individuals through the availability and popularity of those texts, regardless of the origins or socio-cultural characteristics of the readers. Betty Schellenberg, in her study of the *Tour*, adds that “[u]ltimately, the national community is dependent upon a shared effect of the imaginations of individual subjects” (296). As she does with *A Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, I feel we can apply the analysis of Homi K. Bhabha to the *True-Born Englishman*, and see that Defoe

investigates the nation-space in the process of the articulation of elements: where meanings may be partial because they are in medias res; and history may be half-made because it is in the process of being made; and the image of cultural authority may be ambivalent because it is caught, uncertainly, in the act of “composing” its powerful image. (Schellenberg 297)

If with the *Tour* Defoe “achieved the true English epic” (Rogers 185), what appears then in *The True-Born Englishman* is the imagined construction that he has to offer and that drastically differs from other nationalistic characteristics in that it sees the nation as a reality in constant construction, independent of an ethnic past, which does not preclude a nationalist present, as the word *Forging* in the title of Linda Colley’s book, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, encapsulates. In an argument that on second thoughts appears much like a double-bind, Defoe yet convincingly explains that the hybrid character of the English nation is paradoxically what grounds its sovereignty and perfectly corresponds to what Benedict Anderson describes in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983):

[The nation] is imagined as *sovereign* because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. Coming to maturity at a stage of human history when even the most devout adherents of any universal religion were inescapably confronted with the living pluralism of such religions, and the allomorphism between each faith’s ontological claims and territorial stretch, nations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state. (5-7)

That the sovereign state of England should have a Dutch king, that the British monarchy should not be English, is not a problem, says Defoe, as sovereigns’ legitimacy is freely decided by the people on grounds of their best ability to protect and develop England:

When kings the sword of justice first lay down  
 They are no kings though they possess the crown. [...]  
 The nation’s all a mob, there’s no such thing,  
 As lords, or commons, parliament of king; [...]  
 If to a king they do the reins commit,  
 All men are bound in conscience to submit. (Defoe 2003b: 106-107)

An argument he took up again more extensively in *Jure Divino*: “The kings are not kings *Jure Divino* that when they break laws, trample on property, affront religion, invade the liberties of nations, and the like, they may be opposed and resisted by force” (Defoe 2003c: 38). And accepting the Dutch king and his followers for the sake of safeguarding Protestantism in England is, in his eye, the best way for the country to ensure its freedom and thrive. Linda Colley says that “Post 1707 Britain cohered and grew powerful [...] worked and prospered because for a long while it was able to

convince many (never remotely all) within its boundaries that it offered ways for them to get ahead” (2008: xv).

Patrick Parrinder in *Nation and Novel* explains that “[t]he coming age of global commerce” is best dealt with by a “miscegenated and pluralistic nation” (67). This Defoe was clearly convinced of and one cannot help but feel that he seems to advocate colonialism applied to his own country, himself becoming an instrument of colonial authority though belonging to the colonized, at the same time as he endeavours to refuse to acknowledge the difference between colonialists and colonized, undoubtedly because they practice the same religion. He seems to do the reverse of what Bhabha describes when he evidences the way resistance to colonial authority develops in gaps appearing in colonial discourse: Defoe exploits gaps in anticolonial discourse to deconstruct resistance to William III’s sovereignty by reducing the opposition between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the same and the other, in ways that recall Bhabha’s analysis of colonial discourse as a fetishist discourse. Defoe uses contradictions in resistance not to undermine, but to strengthen what can be considered as William III’s colonial authority, offering both a discourse of colonization and its negation, writing an ideological work that both justifies and legitimates William and Mary’s coronation against those who considered it as a peculiar case of invasion and colonization.

It has been argued (McKeon 158-159) that such debates about legitimacy found an expression in the early novel which stages a number of second-generation immigrants, like Robinson Crusoe or Roxana, or heroes whose birth was illegitimate such as Tom Jones, for instance, or Captain Singleton and Moll Flanders, who embodied a turning away from the idea of traditional, lineage-based identity in favour of the value of the individual. In the early British novel, illegitimate children become positive figures, self sufficient and resilient “with the complex and often contradictory negotiation of merit and blood, acquired and inborn virtue” (Schmidgen 134), when traditionally, as with Dryden for instance, the illegitimate child was a figure of Satan: his *Absalom and Achitophel*, based on the same analogy between the Israelites of the Old Testament and England so that Defoe’s readers could not fail to make the link between the two texts, stages Monmouth, the illegitimate son of Charles II who had tried to overthrow James II, and compares him to a serpent in terms reminiscent for all readers of the age to the description of Satan in *Paradise Lost* (Schmidgen 136). Quite commonly up to the seventeenth century, illegitimacy was synonymous with subversion of order, as it threatened the established lines of descent that founded legitimacy and authority in terms of the divine right of kings. Wolfram Schmidgen

convincingly argues that “Defoe’s dissociation of the bastard figure from his satanic and subversive connotations and his postrevolutionary release into a wider social field prepare the ground for the novel, which appropriates the legacy of bastardy for its depiction of society” (137). Hence the point of studies such as Patrick Parrinder’s that delve into the links between the novel as a genre and the idea of the nation, looking for signs that the novel does voice the perception of a common reading of national history and identity, and building on the fact that “[n]ovels exert a powerful influence on our perceptions of society and of our individual selves” (6). Parrinder interestingly draws on Krishan Kumar’s distinction between nation building and state making, in his *The Making of English National Identity*, to suggest that it is Britain’s imperialist development that forced ethnic identity out in favour of a “political, cultural or religious mission” (Kumar 34, quoted in Parrinder 18), a theme clearly dealt with in early eighteenth-century fiction. As Kathleen Wilson reminds us in her book on *The Island Race*, the number of studies concerning the concept of identity in the eighteenth century—dealing with nation, gender, empire, class, politics, race—implies that there is hesitation as to the validity of the concept in an age when identity is tentatively discussed as being both voluntary and imposed, individual and collective. Linda Colley convincingly argues that the construction of national identity had much to do with the expanding empire overseas and reflexions on colonialism (2008: xv) and indeed she starts her study on the British empire with references to *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver’s Travels* (2003: 1).

Hybridity thus stands for Defoe in opposition to what he points as the myth of racial purity, and he refuses to accept a fixed and essentialist ethnic identity for the English nation for political and religious purposes. By describing the English as a blending of different nations he puts forward an alternative discourse that invites a re-examination of power structures where a sense of belonging and legitimacy has nothing to do with ancestral ethnic purity. Consequently, questions such as the difference between a native and an immigrant, between being and becoming English, or, in Edward Said’s terms, filiation and affiliation (17) emerge clearly in this text as they do in Defoe’s fiction. His view of the English nation as a hybrid entity goes against the traditional definition held by those who think nations are “historic phenomena characterized by cultural and ethnic homogeneity” (Colley 2008: 5). Defoe, through his fiction or non-fiction publications, has clearly contributed to the emergence of “the myth of English freedom” (Parrinder 69) and strengthened first Englishness, then Britishness, in an age of imperialism.

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