**Chapter 2**

**Beyond Revolutions and Reversals: The Postcolonial Nuance**

Broadly speaking, the epoch of so many “posts” – post-totalitarian, post-Holocaust, post-modern, post-secular, post-Christian, post-liberal, and so forth – situates theological reasoning within the limelight of irretrievably lost innocence regarding its motivations, capabilities, limitations, and implications. Retrospectively, the Holocaust has been the decisive unsettling ethical challenge for the late modern Western Christian theological and philosophical traditions. Christian theology that is conscious of its “age” has been responding dramatically diversely to the internal Western critiques of racism, totalitarianism, imperialism, and capitalism. Postcolonial criticism, however, disturbs the very intra-Occidental equilibrium of both the disconcerting conditions and their critiques precisely by bringing to the fore different and often disagreeable histories, epistemologies, and anthropologies from variously related and (dis)empowered locations outside the antithetical West/non-West deadlock. The greatest critical and creative merit of postcolonial critiques, I submit, is that they contain potentialities to “provincialize” and “creolize” the Western cultural and intellectual edifice and the enduring methodological dominance of the “Western spectacle,” especially its proclivity toward dualistic regimes of knowledge and representation. Christian theology is undeniably a part and parcel of the Western cultural edifice. But the virtue of the postcolonial challenge does not consist in a mere dismissal and “defrocking” of Western theological traditions as singularly invalid or irrelevant vis-à-vis non-Western religious traditions and sensibilities. It challenges to re-envisage the relationality among the traditions, norms, methods, temperaments, and authorities in the practice of theological reflection on all things as they relate to God in the emerging polycentric world.

Postcolonial critiques interrogate the constellations of asymmetrical relationalities and the quiddity of empowerment and agency involved in these relations. Postcolonial discourse, as I understand and use it, does not operate as a metaphoric blanket term for all sorts of contemporary cultural differences, critical technologies, and marginalities. This type of application has recently become increasingly popular. Postcolonialism describes a “specific set of practices that are grounded in ‘the discursive and material effects of the historical ‘fact’ of colonialism”[[1]](#footnote-1) in its various manifestations. Moreover, postcolonialism is not a historical or discursive space of cleanly and righteously executed reversals of unjustifiable hierarchies of subjugation with some utopian final victory already in sight. Far from it. Rather, it seems to be a quest for a chronotope of repositioned relationality in which the relations of unevenly spread empowerment can be renegotiated and wrenched out of the universalizing modern Western gridlock of unproductive and oppressive binarisms. The post-Holocaust era brought along the “turn to the ethical” at least in some segments of theological inquiry. Postcoloniality confronts theological reasoning with an equally nonnegotiable and thoroughly related claim for the enlargement of the “turn to the ethical” as “turn to the other” in view of the histories of colonialism. The question is about the importance of being consistent in the ethically grounded theological lament, so that this lament does not comfortably revolve around the emblematic Western preoccupations with itself and itself alone as the sole center of value, or at least the sole center of universal tragedy if more congratulatory self-centering gestures are no longer feasible.

Colonialism and imperialism are not insulated political, military, or ideological postures alone. They effectively mutate to become religious and ethical worldviews and cosmologies of divine power. The histories of Christianity’s complex entanglement with colonialism reveal the disturbing collateral damage and irreparable complicity that Western theology in the aftermath of classical colonialism will have to live with penitentially *coram Deo* and in relation to the wronged fellow creatures of God. But more specifically, it is worth noticing that already in the critical anteriority of the high postcolonial theory, a linkage of colonialism and Holocaust has been detected. Frantz Fanon pointed out the similarity between Western colonialism and the fact that “Nazism transformed the whole of Europe into a genuine colony.”[[2]](#footnote-2) The most passionate indictment of the colonial blind spot in the internal Western critiques of modernity comes from Aimé Césaire. He redirects the internal Western gaze to the ostracized underside of modernity – colonialism:

Nazism … is barbarism, the supreme barbarism, the crowning barbarism that sums up all the daily barbarisms; …it is Nazism, yes, but … before [European bourgeoisie] were its victims, they were its accomplices; … they tolerated that Nazism before it was inflicted on them, … they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; … they have cultivated that Nazism, … they are responsible for it, and … before engulfing the whole edifice of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Césaire’s parallel of colonialism and Nazism is summed up by highlighting that Adolf Hitler “applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the ‘coolies’ of India, and the ‘niggers’ of Africa.”[[4]](#footnote-4) The theological significance of the colonialist imaginary and praxis lies, ethically speaking, in the avowed recognition of colonialism as “the vicious aspect of modernity”[[5]](#footnote-5) or “the armed version of modernity”[[6]](#footnote-6) implemented, more often than not, in the tandem of “crown and cross,” of *ecclesia* and *mercatura*. Yet what is “postcolonialism,” or “the postcolonial,” or “postcoloniality” – words that I have allowed to leak into these reflections on so many occasions without rushing to define them?

1. **The Ominous “Post”: Which Postcolonial/ity/ism?**

Postcolonialism means different things to different people. The precise beginnings, meanings, and transgressions of the “post” in post(-)colonial/ity/ism have remained under unrelenting interrogation since the earlier in-depth analyses in the 1990s.[[7]](#footnote-7) The “post” in “postcolonial” is most definitely not a simple matter of chronological time[[8]](#footnote-8) in the sense of describing the “after” of the “classical” colonialism as an accomplished victory of decolonization. Colonialism, according to Stuart Hall, is more than the exercise of direct colonial rule since it signifies “the whole process of expansion, exploration, conquest, colonization and imperial hegemonisation which constituted the ‘outer face’, the constitutive outside, of European and then Western capitalist modernity.”[[9]](#footnote-9) Despite the colonial penchant for the omnipresent binary oppositions, under the aegis of colonialism “differential temporalities and histories have been irrevocably and violently yoked together.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Hence “no site, either ‘there’ or ‘here’, in its fantasied autonomy and in-difference, could develop without taking into account its significant and/or abjected others”[[11]](#footnote-11) any longer. In this context, postcolonial criticism is the analysis of an age – the age of “postcolony” – which according to Achille Mbembe, “encloses multiple *durées* made up of discontinuities, reversals, intertias, and swings that overlay one another, interpenetrate one another, and envelope one another: an *entanglement*.”[[12]](#footnote-12) “Postcolony” as a concept-metaphor is a “figure of a fact – the fact of brutality, its forms, its shapes, its markings, its composite faces, its fundamental rhythms and its ornamentation.”[[13]](#footnote-13)

Now colonialism is a relationality imaged, legitimated, and executed in the mode of violence and coercion. Postcoloniality as its ambiguous posteriority is above all, I submit, a trajectory of desire for an intersubjective and intercultural chronotope as “an arena where inequalities, imbalances and asymmetries could historicize themselves ‘relationally’, an arena where dominant historiographies could be made accountable to the ethico-political authority of emerging histories.”[[14]](#footnote-14) Despite the recurrent problematic connotations of the “post” as premature, overly celebratory, or even dangerously misleading in postcolonial theory’s (often accurately) suspected textual and cultural suspension of history and politics,

postcoloniality, for its part, is a salutary reminder of the persistent ‘neo-colonial” relations with the ‘new’ world order and multinational division of labour. Such a perspective enables the authentication of histories of exploitation and the evolution of strategies of resistance. Beyond this, postcolonial critique bears witness to those countries and communities – in the North and the South, urban and rural – constituted, if I may coin a phrase, “otherwise than modernity.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

The “post” in postcolonialism suggests a dialectical relationality of the past and present. It displays prominently a simultaneous “epistemological break with and an ironic continuity”[[16]](#footnote-16) of the colonial modes of living and knowing. If colonial imagination is inscribed within the universalizing tropes of dualistic boundaries, then, according to Ella Shohat,

the term ‘post-colonial’ would be more precise, therefore, if articulated as ‘post-First/Third Worlds theory,’ or ‘post-anti-colonial critique,’ as a movement beyond a relatively binaristic, fixed and stable mapping of power relations between ‘colonizer/colonized’ and ‘center/periphery’. Such rearticulations suggest a more nuanced discourse, which allows for movement, mobility and fluidity.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Postcolonial critiques offer conjectures toward post-binary thinking and imagination not by abolishing difference – frequently struggling and failing mightily in their own efforts not to repeat the essentializing habits of modern colonial imaginaries – but by calling into question the inertias of binary logic, especially when they are enthroned and projected as universal. The aspirations of postcolonial criticism are vectored toward the imaginary of (cultural) hybridity as a space that obtains “in-between the designations of identity” and that “entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy.”[[18]](#footnote-18)

In the context of this dissertation, the decisive critical and constructive appeal of postcolonialism consists in its interrogation of the Western paradigm of epistemological imagination. For this reflection on theological method, postcolonialism is relevant as a distinctively shaped trans-disciplinary critical subjectivity and as a hermeneutical strategy:

Postcolonialism … is seen as an oppositional reading practice, and as a way of critiquing the totalizing forms of Eurocentric thinking and of reshaping dominant meanings. It is a mental attitude rather than a method, more a subversive stance towards the dominant knowledge than a school of thought. (…) It is a reading posture (…) It is a discursive resistance to imperialism, imperial ideologies, imperial attitudes and their continued incarnations in such wide-ranging fields as politics, economics, history and theological and biblical studies.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Within such an enlargement of the “postcolonial” lies its hottest critical purchase as well as its abundantly theorized hazards, for the idea is, as Benita Parry rightfully warns,

fluid, polysemic, and ambiguous. The consequence to this plenitude of signification is that the word has come to indicate a historical transition, an achieved epoch, a cultural location, a theoretical stance, and indeed in the spirit of mastery and impenetrability favored by Humpty-Dumpty in his dealings with language, whatever the author chooses it to mean.[[20]](#footnote-20)

As a critical theory, postcolonialism has sought to “challenge the grand march of western historicism with its entourage of binaries (self-other, metropolis-colony, center-periphery, etc.).”[[21]](#footnote-21) This challenge has been accompanied by destabilization of the very “binaristic premise” which, whether employed epistemologically, culturally, or politically, has been “designed to subserve a larger if concealed project of power and hegemony.”[[22]](#footnote-22)

However, it is the distinctive acknowledgment of the “ethical pre-text” – “the idea that postcolonial criticism is itself an ethical enterprise”[[23]](#footnote-23) – that enables postcolonial critical practices to advance the quest for justice in ways that poststructuralism and postmodernism would not. Postcolonial critique is aligned with the impetus that Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has repeatedly described as the joining of hands between history and literary criticism “in search of the ethical as it interrupts the epistemological.”[[24]](#footnote-24) The “ethical pre-text” bears most directly – even though often implicitly – on the inherent “object relations referenced by the binary oppositions” so that the “destabilizations of the binaries are often proffered as attempts at rectifying disorders in the extra-textual world of social relations.”[[25]](#footnote-25) Kwame Anthony Appiah links the particularity of postcolonialism – vis-à-vis postmodernism – as grounded precisely “in the appeal to an ethical universal” which is in turn grounded “in an appeal to a certain simple respect for human suffering.”[[26]](#footnote-26) The postcolonial challenge of the oppressive legitimating narratives across the interlinked terrains of epistemological and cultural imagination all the way into political praxis of cohabitation, recognition, and inclusion, proceeds “in the name of the suffering victims.”[[27]](#footnote-27) It is this ethical tenet of postcolonial criticism – contradictory, elusive, and provisional – that constitutes its particular appeal for theological search of quiddities of relation beyond the conceptual gridlocks of binary logic. As Sugirtharajah points out in the context of biblical interpretation, postcolonial criticism “provides openings for oppositional readings, uncovers suppressed voices and, more pertinently, has as its foremost concern victims and their plight.”[[28]](#footnote-28) Ethics, as I have said repeatedly, is about the quiddity, or the quality and pattern, of lived relations. Postcolonialism as a sustained scrutiny of variously motivated and (dis)empowered relationalities can be useful as a critical tool, interrogating the ethical conditions and ethical *desiderata* of living together among outrageously discordant variations of life within the irreversible entanglement of global postcolony. Without claiming omniscience and renouncing slippages into false theoretical messianism, if postcolonialism as a discourse about the problematic of relationality is to be useful for living and thinking, then its pivotal concerns are worth being recognized as cooperative and solidary. It is so because the quiddity of relations concerns the intimate texture of everyday lives of all people, materially and imaginatively. Then its ethico-political authority can become an “intervention in the general scheme of things” and thus a “matter for general concern and awareness and not the mere resentment of a ghetto.”[[29]](#footnote-29) It is as an intervention in the general scheme of Western habitual economy of knowledge, imagination, and representation that postcolonialism becomes an irresistible conversation partner for theological inquiry in search for post-binary envisagement of relationality.

1. **Postcolonial Reasons For Theological Reasoning**

What have liturgical and sacramental modes of theological inquiry to do with postcolonialism? Judging from the still prevalent scarcity of engagements between liturgical, and especially sacramental, theologies with postcolonial discourse, it may seem that the answer is – not much. Meanwhile, in the slowly emerging conversation of Christian systematic theology and postcolonialism,[[30]](#footnote-30) it has become a virtually mantric gesture to quote R.S. Sugirtharajah’s observation that “what is striking about systematic theology is the reluctance of its practitioners to address the relation between European colonialism and the field.”[[31]](#footnote-31) I follow the ritual gesture of quoting Sugirtharajah here only because his observation still holds true regarding doctrinal reflection, especially when it comes to axiological preferences of what (“proper”) Christian theology supposedly is and what the legitimate method of theological inquiry must be. But in this regard, systematic theology is rather ironically similar to postcolonial studies. Postcolonial discourses have shown a consistent disinterestedness – if not an open hostility toward – in religion, let alone theology, until very recently.[[32]](#footnote-32) On the other hand, for example, Edward W. Said frequently used a certain notion of “religion” in his postcolonial theorizing but for him it functions as an ambivalent and idiosyncratic concept-metaphor for virtually everything that is indefensible and unacceptable from a critical postcolonial and secular humanist perspective.[[33]](#footnote-33) It would surely not be wise to underestimate the deterring effect of the unholy “synergy of conquest, commerce, and Christ”[[34]](#footnote-34) in the maintenance of the West-centered colonial world order as an understandable reason for the postcolonial eschewing of productive engagement with theological milieu. Yet as elitist and ultimately unfruitful as such Marxist bias unfortunately has been, in the present situation of the world being “as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever”[[35]](#footnote-35) it seems simply evasive to shun religion and theology as sources of meaningful action and even liberation across many arenas of life from the epistemological and the political to the aesthetic.[[36]](#footnote-36) In addition, the occlusion of religion in most versions of the high postcolonial theory curiously (nostalgically?) repeats the aging modern gesture of separation among the political, social, cultural, and religious aspects of life. Herein hides one of the weakest “post” and simultaneously one of the strongest aspects of Occidental modernity in postcolonial theory. Such methodological imaginary of disjunctive enclosure ironically proliferates nothing else beyond the fatigued “secular fictions” of Western modernity which Achille Mbembe has rightly lamented.

Other disciplines, such as biblical and historical studies, and notably feminist theology, have engaged more extensively with the religious inspirations and implications of colonialism and imperialism. Yet it remains by and large true that “colonialism has never been a popular subject for theological enquiry in Western discourse.”[[37]](#footnote-37) Moreover, Sugirtharajah’s analysis is ever more true regarding liturgical theology. As Michael Jagessar and Stephen Burns note, “the study of Christian worship is as yet to be appraised – at least in print – through the optic of a sustained and developed postcolonial perspective.”[[38]](#footnote-38) They rightly emphasize that the thematic fixture of “inculturation”[[39]](#footnote-39) within liturgical theology must come under the scrutiny of postcolonial optic precisely because of its likely deployment as yet another invisible “form of hegemonic control, empire building and colonization.”[[40]](#footnote-40) By “inculturation” Western theological discourse usually describes the process of implantation and integration of Christianity in predominantly non-Western geocultural locations. The unacknowledged prolegomenon of this paradigm is an assumption that the versions of Christian theology and liturgical practice to be “inculturated” are akin to the once highly esteemed idea of the abstract, ahistorical, and otherwise culturally naked “essence of Christianity” without being recognized for what they really are – culturally specific and mostly Occidental versions of Christianity. In an emerging polycentric world it is clearly discursively and ethically *passé* to maintain the legitimacy of often historically experienced non-reciprocal directionality of “inculturation” (or, its conceptual and ideological synonyms “indigenization” and “contextualization”) without a meticulous and critical self-interrogation. Susan Abraham, like Peter Phan, has pointed out that often “inculturation” in a global setting has practically demanded conversion not merely to Christianity as a religion, but renunciation of one’s culture and epistemological outlook as well. On the one hand, “inculturation” indeed acknowledges the porous boundaries of cultures, while on the other it disavows the necessity for reciprocal openness such porous boundaries would seem to entail:

It is one thing to say that Christianity can take root in other cultures because of the openness of those cultures. It is quite another thing to demand the same openness of oneself in the manner that one is able to provide for inclusive models of relating from within the tradition.[[41]](#footnote-41)

The discourse of “inculturation” is not coextensive with postcolonially engaged theological discourse. Under the paradigm of “inculturation,” in the present era of “world Christianity” it has become more popular to utilize the contributions of non-Western or marginally Western theologians as a sort of boutique *florilegia* to the otherwise straightforwardly Western patterns, preferences, normativities, and temperaments of theological disposition. Such endeavors tend to conscript non-Western or marginally Western theologians as “native informants.” In the words of Patrick A. Kalilombe, the officially approved multicultural appendixes often reinforce only too stealthily the image of non-Western Christian theological rationalities as “purveyors of exotic, raw intellectual material to people in the North.”[[42]](#footnote-42) Demographically and culturally it is obvious that Christianity is a truly global faith tradition. Indeed, it has never been a purely Western faith tradition. Yet theologically – especially regarding the methodological criteria and preferences of theological inquiry – the Western constellations of theological normativity continue to reinscribe themselves as universally adequate, appropriate, and conductive in practically all contexts. A laudable recent attempt to engage with postcolonialism was the 2009 annual meeting of the North American Academy of Liturgy that included a panel of relevant papers under the auspices of the Emerging Critical Resources for Liturgical Studies Group.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Moving beyond the “inculturation” imaginary, I also need to say that postcolonially engaged theological inquiry does not *necessarily* coincide with decolonization of theology either. Decolonization as a gesture of reversal – laudable and righteous as it is in certain situations – entails the impetus of “stripping theology of its westernised mould, its Eurocentric character.”[[44]](#footnote-44) Decolonization as rectification by reversal, often rather violently, shifts the focus of theology away from imposed/imported questions that rarely matter outside the constellations of Western theological normativity. However, engagement with postcolonial theories and discourses, I submit, provides a possibility for another itinerary beyond both colonially complicit “inculturation” and decolonization as a (impossible) reversal of forced “inculturation,” for those locations of spiritual praxis and theological enunciation which cannot be extricated from their ongoing participation in tremendously complex and overlapping realities. The state of mutual contamination among not just different, but profoundly unequal cultures and traditions of thought, worship, wisdom, suffering and survival, is irreversible in the present circumstances. Postcolonial discourses can therefore be instrumental in bringing this multifaceted state of affairs and its non-negotiable epistemological polyvocality to bear on the culturally established – and frequently entrenched in their dominance – theological rationalities within the West. For theological rationalities and imaginations which belong to the late modern Western cultural milieu unequivocally – by virtue of an internal subalternity or a diversely vectored diasporic “double consciousness” – postcolonial discourses might just be the interpretive “optic” best positioned to attempt to respond non-reductively, at least in aspirations if not in implementations, to the convoluted complexities of lived experience. Of course, no theory can ever be an adequate representation of lived reality. No finite conceptual framework can equal the infinite texture and complexity and entanglement of actual life phenomena. Hence, I submit, postcolonial discourses ought most emphatically not to be cheered as yet another ersatz master narrative of fashionable theological rejuvenation – or yet another adventure of a domineering theory framing the conditions for “a deity’s entrance” in theology. What they do facilitate is, I believe, an emergence of theological sensibilities better equipped to articulate the increasingly widespread existential engagements of lives being lived through multiple belongings, in multi-vocalities of expression, and under interstitial integrity. Additionally, to move beyond certain persistently unproductive theological tribulations – such as the resilient disengagement of liturgy and ethics precisely as a symptom of a broader predicament of dualistic Western (theological) reasoning – the postcolonial discourse of hybridity as inciting modulation of the Manichean[[45]](#footnote-45) habits of thought and agency can be a particularly useful ally. What I envision is a conversation between theology and postcolonialism – not a conversion! – stretching beyond the still systematically underrated sinister complicity of Christianity as socio-cultural force and of Christian theological imagination with the colonial and neo-colonial escapades across so variously scathed terrains of subjugation and despair. This conversation intrudes right into the doctrinal and methodological inner sanctum of theological enterprise. The thrust and range of postcolonially scored theological reasoning obtains most fruitfully, I believe, when “the word ‘postcolonial’ signifies an attribute of mind being applied to the doing of theology”[[46]](#footnote-46) rather than a delineation of discreet themes and disciplinary boundaries within some incarcerated “postcolonial theology.” Of course, this is neither a sole possible nor a sole legitimate understanding of postcolonially colored theological sensibility and practice. But wherein consists the theologically relevant fecundity of postcolonial critiques – as avenues of inquiry for a certain intellectual catholicism – in relation to the disengagement of liturgy and ethics?

1. **Hybridity as an Attribute of a Postcolonially Colored Diasporic Theological Temperament**

Hybridity is among the most popular analytical metaphors in the theoretical arsenal of postcolonialism. Unsurprisingly, it is also among the most problematic and elusive components of postcolonial discourses. What makes hybridity a supremely interesting and relevant notion is the fact that hybridity is arguably the signature postcolonial imaginary of subversion vis-à-vis the colonial mode of coercive, binaristic, and hegemonic relationality. As such, hybridity brings into the conversation between theology and postcoloniality a valuable challenge and opportunity, particularly since the quiddity of relationality presents itself as one of the pivotal predicaments for theological imagination of this age to struggle with. In relation to the quandary of disengagement of liturgy and ethics, the opportunity that appears here is that hybridity sounds out a possible way of inhabiting and entertaining difference relationally without its “doxa”[[47]](#footnote-47) and without an assumed or imposed hierarchy, to put it in a somewhat Bhabhian way.

As there is an unruly plurality of postcolonialisms, there is also a dense plurality of approaches to hybridity. Complaints about the malleability and vacuity of the term abound.[[48]](#footnote-48) On the one hand, hybridity is used to denote the cultural and racial syncretism, creolization, or *métissage* that increasingly characterizes the unprecedented transnational migration and interaction, materially and virtually, throughout the present globalization of culture. From this perspective, the notion of hybridity describes the process of constructive fusion and mixture of cultural identities, knowledges, languages, races, sexualities, and ethnicities. This kind of hybridity marks the present, historically postcolonial and globalized, era of previously unprecedented migration of people, goods, services, and ideas. In this sense, hybridity is akin to what Mikhail Bakhtin termed the unconscious “organic” or unintentional hybridization.[[49]](#footnote-49) In this, comparatively generic sense, the embodied hybridity describes the unceasing negotiation of difference that underlies the experience of translocality of migrants, exiles, refugees, displaced persons and even those who encounter such people from the relative stability of their own more permanent domicile.

On the other hand, there is a stubborn insistence in the postcolonial critical sensibility on the specific character of hybridity as precisely not being “any given mixing of cultural materials, backgrounds, or identities, but [implying] a markedly unbalanced relationship”[[50]](#footnote-50) across the relational interface. This perception of hybridity, materially and theoretically, appears to be supremely fascinating for theological inquiry, especially as such a constructive effort also resonates with the broader “organic” lived reality of hybridization. It is beyond the scope and besides the objective of this project to dwell too extensively on the manifold theoretical aporias of the celebrity-concept of hybridity. The ideas of hybridity I converse with represent only those perspectives that come across as critically and constructively useful for this project. Suffice it to say that within many postcolonial perspectives, particularly remembering the “ethical pre-text,” hybridity is often suspected as a glib sublation of the very metropolitan oblivion (“metropolitan hybridity”[[51]](#footnote-51)) toward specific histories of human pain, exploitation, violence, and affliction from colonial hegemonies which postcolonialism precisely envisions to interrupt. The insistence on the ethical interruption of the epistemological through the postcolonial elaborations on hybridity nevertheless remains as a “strong ethical note” and as an “ongoing struggle” to imagine and construct the possibility of hybridity as “a zone where people can meet – themselves or each other – and where ‘our perceptions and our lives are transfused with light’.”[[52]](#footnote-52)

Without doubt, great care “to avoid a history-less fetishization of the metaphor”[[53]](#footnote-53) must underwrite the critical purchase of hybridity. Yet, constructively speaking, certain versions of hybridity can serve as avenues for discerning a post-binary pattern of relationality complex enough to facilitate – even though not to comprehend or adequately accommodate – the asymmetries of difference reciprocally. In other words, I find the analytical potential of hybridity useful for theologies in search of transformative modulation of relationality away from the habitual either/or entrapment of dualistic Western epistemological imagination. If indeed the presently experienced intense transformations of life toward increased mixing, cross-pollinations, and reconfigurations of identities also produce what Radhakrishnan calls “the transformation of a lived reality into cognitive model,”[[54]](#footnote-54) such a relational traffic between lived existential engagements and theoretical discourses does not disqualify the imaginary of hybridity as a valid critical tool. It seems to be the case simply because all our patterns and structures of rationality and intelligibility are culturally and historically situated – while they are not necessarily culturally, and thus axiologically, incarcerated. Finally, as already noted in the Introduction, my own location of theological and critical enunciation – among various others – is diasporically hybrid and thus ripe with intersecting cultural and linguistic sensibilities, wherein Radhakrishnan’s idea of “lived reality – cognitive model transformation” is indeed the effectively inescapable watermark of routine living and thinking. Hence the interdisciplinary traffic between theology and postcolonial criticism, or cultural criticism in general, also cannot proceed otherwise than as a two-way street, all the roadwork and congestion notwithstanding. This, however, is exactly where hybridity stands out as an attempt to ponder over such traffic as it is embodied in lived intercultural and interreligious experience as well as in encounters among diverse theoretical discourses.

Hybridity refers to that unstable and interactive open spatiality in which selves and othernesses become enmeshed, decentered, and recentered. Rita Felski argues that

…metaphors of hybridity and the like not only recognize differences within the subject, fracturing and complicating holistic notions of identity, but also address connections between subjects by recognizing affiliations, cross-pollinations, echoes, and repetitions, thereby unseating difference from a position of absolute priviledge. Instead of endorsing a draft toward an ever greater atomization of identity, such metaphors allow us to conceive of multiple, interconnecting axes of affiliation and differentiation.[[55]](#footnote-55)

Hybridity as a notion functions polysemantically across various terrains of reality and theoretical discourse. Hybridity thrives on the challenge of essentialized identities and differences, and both of those locked into habitually antagonistic zero-sum juxtaposition. The anti-essentialist thrust emphasizes mutual imbrications – ambivalence, syncretism – not isolated positionalities. Hybridity describes subversive and interstitial passage, which in postcolonial context disrupts “the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority” and it “displays the necessary deformation of displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination.”[[56]](#footnote-56) Hybridity is not a discourse about cancellations, reversals, or saturated reconciliations in seamless fusion. Bhabha has spoken memorably about hybridity not being “the third term that resolves tensions”[[57]](#footnote-57) but rather hinting at the possibility of the enunciative “third space” which “enables other positions to emerge”[[58]](#footnote-58) beyond the customary antitheses. Hybridity emerges as a “catholic” preference for the ‘both/and’ imaginary of reasoning and acting beyond the rationale of binarity. In Robert Young’s words,

Hybridity … makes difference into sameness, and sameness into difference, but in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different. In that sense, it operates according to the form of logic that Derrida isolates in the term ‘brisure’, a breaking and joining at the same time, in the same place: difference and sameness in an apparently impossible simultaneity. Hybridity thus consists of a bizarre binate operation, in which each impulse is qualified against the other, forcing momentary forms of dislocation and displacement into complex economies of agonistic reticulation. This double logic, which goes against the convention of rational either/or choices, but which is repeated in science in the split between incompatible coexisting logics of classical and quantum physics, could be said to be as characteristic of the twentieth century as oppositional dialectical thinking was of the nineteenth.[[59]](#footnote-59)

The “third space” may help to elude the “politics of polarity”[[60]](#footnote-60) by allowing hitherto subjugated knowledges and experiences to enter into the dominant discourses to implement the displacement of unjust domination. Hence hybridity functions a site of agency in the act of living out and beyond the gridlock of hierarchically construed binary couplings of identities, races, cultures, values, ideologies, genders, concepts, and classes. Yet hybridity as the interstitial “third space” is not a single new form of indiscriminate totality wherein all jaggedness of the materiality of life and habits of mind would be resolved in elegiac syncretism. What hybridity facilitates is an ambivalent relationality – an irrevocably porous, non-transparent, and uncertain/unmasterable relationality. This hybridity is constituted by variously endowed disparities in everyday life as well in modes of human knowledge and belief.

This brings a critically important aspect of hybridity to the fore. The relational mutuality and complementarity entailed in hybridity is not a simple “breaking and joining at the same time” that takes place among equally empowered differences. This is a model of relationality that seems to prevail in superficial conceptions of multiculturalism as harmonious fusion. Yet postcolonial hybridity as the condition of “in-betweenness” and as concept of relationality allows discordance and conflictuality, and thus

…confronts and problematises boundaries, although it does not erase them. As such, hybridity always implies an unsettling of identities. It is precisely our encounters at the border … that make us realise how riven with potential miscomunnication and intercultural conflict these encounters can be. This tells us that hybridity, the very condition of in-betweenness, can never be a question of simple shaking hands, of happy, harmonious merger and fusion. Hybridity is not the solution, but alerts us to the difficulty of living with differences, their ultimately irreducible resistance to complete dissolution.[[61]](#footnote-61)

Ien Ang’s emphasis on the “rivenness” of hybrid relationalities directs attention the modalities of hybridity. The emphasis on the need to interrogate the quiddity of hybrid relationalities is, I believe, underwritten by the concern about ethical dimensions of the discourse on hybridity. As a “sign of challenge and altercation, not of congenial amalgamation or merger,”[[62]](#footnote-62) hybridity does not gloss over the possibilities and actualities of a dissonant make-up and of asymmetrical reciprocities which hybrid relationality facilitates for good or for ill. On the other hand, the idea of hybridity insists on maintaining the space open for an interlacing of political, cultural, and ethical agencies which may well interact on different planes of authority, different levels of dominance and subalternity, yet these agential interactions – as uneven and as ugly as they can be – are disentangled from the binarisms of pure power versus pure impotence. In this way hybridity as an imaginary of relationality carries the movement of de-absolutization of the rationale of binarity in epistemological imagination but also in terms of human agency socially, culturally, politically, ethically, and religiously. Hybridity as an interface for a relational palimpsest of agencies and rationalities – erratic and imperfect as it is – does contain a certain “paranoid threat” as Bhabha observes. It is a threat to “the symmetry and duality of self/other, inside/outside”[[63]](#footnote-63) which are broken down by contesting the boundaries of life and thought. The unidirectional architectonic of power modulates into multidirectional orchestration of authorities, identities, and integrities touching one another and thus being touched by one another in transformative – in commendable or regrettable – ways. Hence the idea of hybridity is one of the “threat” moments where postcolonial optic reshapes the *habitus* of Occidental epistemological imagination and its dualistic regimes of representation.

1. **Diasporic Imaginary: A Fugued Homing Desire**

Where does diaspora come into the postcolonial discourse? Colonialism was a remarkably diasporic enterprise, involving both the colonizing and the colonized parties to various degrees and with radically different political and economic consequences. Initially the term “diaspora” used to describe dispersion from homelands such as historical Jewish, Greek, and Armenian diasporas. More recently diaspora has come to connote – sometimes rather controversially – a broader spectrum of migrancies including exiles, immigrants, refugees, migrant workers, ethnic, religious, racial, and cultural minorities. In postcolonial setting, diaspora points to the most extreme consequences of imperial dominance resulting in large scale displacements of people due to war, colonialism and decolonization, economic and socio-political shifts, as well as famine and ethnic cleansings. Yet these displacements are in the process of producing “profoundly disruptive effect upon the whole edifice of European epistemological and political power because it disrupts modernity, it disrupts the idea of nation and national identity, it disrupts the notion of unity and coherence to rational subjectivity and it becomes a prominent feature of the contemporary post-colonial world.”[[64]](#footnote-64) Among many descriptions of diaspora, the following stands out as an attempt to represent the intertwined intricacies of negotiation among losses and gains that permeate the diasporic social position. Lingyan Yang suggests that diaspora is

the material conditions and dialectical process of negotiating with the historical conditions, geographical relocations, cultural displacements, emotional alienation, trauma or relief, symbolic representations, artistic imaginations, philosophical conceptions, or political dispossessions of leaving homes, homelands, home cultures and mother tongues, by necessity or by choice, due to a variety of reasons in different historical epochs. Simultaneously diaspora is also the forced or chosen making, creating, and articulating of their new cultural existential selves in the NEW adopted homes (such as America), new cultures, new nations, and new m(O)ther tongues.[[65]](#footnote-65)

The notion of hybridity is often rightly suspected of sneaky (mis)identification with depoliticized and ahistorical cultural relativism of picking-and-mixing out of entitlement and leisure rather than out of forced context of survival. The same is true regarding certain theoretical notions of diaspora as a particular constellation of hybridity, proposing it as the ideal postmodern and postcolonial social condition. They lean toward hyper-metaphorization of diaspora into a paradigmatic subjectivity most often pertaining to upwardly-mobile elite intellectuals under the auspices of celebratory multiculturalism.[[66]](#footnote-66) Diaspora does not merely equal metropolitan deracination.[[67]](#footnote-67) As Anne Joh poignantly observes, a thoroughly postcolonial version of hybridity comes as “foremost an extreme sense of pain, of loss, of agonizing dislocations and fragmentations.”[[68]](#footnote-68) Applying Edward W. Said’s sober and enlarged notion of “exile” to various types of contemporary migrancies of forced choice, it is supremely appropriate to say that these variously enforced migrancies “are strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience.”[[69]](#footnote-69)

Yet the discourse about diaspora – the kind of life communities and individuals lead in geo-political and cultural displacement – is not about either pure pain or romanticized “immigrant moment of as a mode of perennial liminality.”[[70]](#footnote-70) Rather, the versatile diasporic *habitus* inhabits a peculiarly intermingled spectrum of languages, influences, experiences, allegiances, and heritages simultaneously, living all these various gravitational pulls together in a fluid equilibrium. It is very dangerous to generalize due to the immense diversity of diasporic positionalities – so incredibly variously situated across the interfaces of race, gender, class, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, education, language and generation – but one summary observation of diasporic subjectivity appears to be somewhat warranted. Diasporic subjectivity routinely lives what one cannot automatically and effortlessly reconcile in discursive and analytical ways. The implications of displaced/emplaced translocality “cannot be limited to the two locations that have most framed migrants’ identities. The translocality of migrants means that their senses of themselves draw on inflections and emphases of different ethnic communities in other parts of the world.”[[71]](#footnote-71) Diasporic subjectivity and imagination is akin to what Kwok Pui-lan calls the “border subject,” who is not a “hero or villain, but … a much more complex, three-dimensional subject situated in the enthralling plots or irony, between satire and despair, between rage and empathy, between absurdity and hopefulness.”[[72]](#footnote-72) The border-passage efforts at uniting and reconciling are often not glamorous – even when lauded and marketed as such by certain intellectual elites – since more often than not

… diasporic consciousness ‘makes best of a bad situation’. Experiences of loss, marginality, and exile (differently cushioned by class) are often reinforced by systematic exploitation and blocked advancement. Thus constitutive suffering coexists with the skills of survival… Diaspora consciousness lives loss and hope as a defining tension.[[73]](#footnote-73)

Diasporic experience, according to Stuart Hall, is “defined not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity.”[[74]](#footnote-74) What obtains is a diasporic imaginary of “both” and “neither/nor”– “neither home nor not-home”[[75]](#footnote-75) as well as that of multiple belongings held together by a “homing desire”[[76]](#footnote-76) within the delicate equilibrium of an interstitial integrity. Diasporic subjectivity lives in and through hybridity; it is a performed hybridity which facilitates the transformational commerce of “lived reality into a cognitive model.” Thus, as Joh accurately observes, the condition of hybrid identity obtains not as “the combination of right parts, an accumulation or a fusion of various parts, but an energy field of different forces.”[[77]](#footnote-77) The outcome, always in making, is a diasporic imaginary marked by an amalgam of relationalities, interlaced in mundane embodiments of lived tension. Diasporic subjectivities are Janus-faced, being poised between overlapping and contestatory legacies and imperatives as they inhabit cultural “heterochronicity.”[[78]](#footnote-78) Diasporic imaginary is thus more or less fugued: it lives as an ongoing texture of sometimes hardly bearable polyvocality “homing in” toward a harmony without coercive inclusion and most often realizing in the itinerary of this very “homing” how far from such a harmony it finds itself. In the most unhomely instances, the diasporic imaginary resembles the entanglement of both/and in a “confrontation of perhaps ultimately incompatible but equally insuppressible logics, whose intensities are, at every juncture, provokingly instructive.”[[79]](#footnote-79) I must note, however, that what remains provokingly instructive for a diasporic thinker, also leaves intact what Said called the exilic “resentment” of (non)belonging and being “always out of place.”[[80]](#footnote-80)

As far as theology is concerned, diasporic imaginary concretizes and situates the focus on hybridity as a pivotal constructive concept-metaphor and as a means to transform the conceptual terrain of the disengagement of liturgy and ethics beyond the rationale of binarity. It does so, as I see it, by adding a touch of authentically non-dramatic and non-exceptional character for this kind of conceptual re-envisagement by the virtue of its own routine embeddedness in a routine lived complexity of here and there in which the perennial Western predicament of interacting with alterity has lost at least some of its allergic edge. I must say “some,” since among the vices of diaspora, an inflated and compensatory rhetoric of superiority vis-à-vis other communities in tandem with a jealous – indeed voluntarily ghettoizing – policing of a community’s cultural, religious, and social boundaries, often stand out prominently and even violently. What cannot be passed over without notice is perhaps the greatest irony that the diasporic life mischievously accommodates even the shrillest rhetoric of nativistic purity together and concurrently with practices of everyday living far more enmeshed in the porous cross-fertilization in the transcultural “diaspora space”[[81]](#footnote-81) than many dare to admit.

Of course, putting the Western conundrum of alterity and relationality in terms of allergy betrays indebtedness to a certain critical lineage, namely, the ethical thought of Emmanuel Levinas. It foreshadows the upcoming – staged, of course – conversation among two diasporic thinkers – Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas and Russian Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemann – on liturgy and ethics. Even though strikingly differently, both thinkers register with more or less urgency the modern Western disengagement of liturgy and life as a fundamental philosophical, theological, and ethical problem. For Levinas, the question is about the whole Western habitual economy of relating to otherness, since

Western philosophy coincides with the disclosure of the other where the other, in manifesting itself as a being, loses its alterity. From its infancy philosophy has been struck with a horror of the other that remains other – with an insurmountable allergy. It is for this reason that it is essentially a philosophy of being, that the comprehension of being is its last word, and the fundamental structure of man. It is for this reason that it becomes philosophy of immanence and of autonomy, or atheism.[[82]](#footnote-82)

Levinas’ concern about the reduction of the other and the other’s non-assimilable otherness to the same is on the one hand a concern about the mode of relationality eerily resembling colonialism: invasive, arrogant, egoistic, reductive, and thus unethical. On the other hand, as it will emerge in Part II, the insurmountable allergy toward alterity appears to remain unalleviated, let alone cured, if the cure comes by reversal alone.

The versatile Eastern Orthodox tradition, represented by Schmemann, enters the conversation with a notably different epistemological imagination in comparison to the West. The ethos of Eastern theologies feels more at home with the both/and logic of knowledge, relation, and agency than with the either/or orientation so characteristic in the Occidental intellectual and cultural traditions. It is tempting to assume that this tradition provides an easier conversation partner vis-à-vis postcolonial worldviews and their logics of hybridity. Instead, as Part II will highlight, Schmemann’s liturgical theology precisely problematizes the relation between liturgy and ethics no less than Levinas’ philosophy. The major difference between Schmemann and Levinas is not in their resounding critiques of the dominant Occidental cultural and intellectual tradition, but in their diametrically opposite views on the relation between liturgy and ethics. However, the underlying conceptual grid(lock) in both cases remains – curiously – very similar in its practical dependency on the same highly suspected binary logic of boundaries which comprises the major characteristic of the repudiated Occidental modernity.

The upcoming Part II of this project is an asymmetrical double-conversation with Levinas and Schmemann as two diasporic thinkers wrestling with the binaries swirling within and around the (dis)engagement of liturgy and ethics. As I have argued in the first chapter of Part I, this disengagement presents itself as a symptom of a larger problem of habitual dualism of the Western regimes of knowledge and epistemological imagination. Both Schmemann and Levinas speak from the diasporic interstices of Western modernity about an uncommonly enlarged liturgy and an uncommonly enlarged ethics respectively. Both gesture – if profoundly ambivalently – beyond the binary world sustained and structured by competitive dominance. Herein hides their enduring fascination. Herein also resides the opening for constructive challenge from those perspectives more at home in postcolonial hybridity, particularly drawing inspiration from Edward W. Said’s notion of hybridity as counterpoint which will enter into this conversation in Part III.

1. John Thieme, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Essential Glossary* (London: Arnold, 2003):123. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Richard Philcox, trans.; Foreword by Homi K.Bhabha; Preface by Jean-Paul Sartre; New York: Grove Press, 2004): 57. Of course, from Fanon’s Marxist perspective which continues in a similar vein among many postcolonial theorists, he does not find it necessary to acknowledge the equally appalling Russian/Soviet colonial policies and practices before, during, and long after the Nazi period in European colonial history. This occlusion is a common feature in postcolonial criticism. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (Joan Pinkham, trans.; introduction by Robin D.G. Kelley; New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000):36. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Configurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2003):4. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (Oxford and Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983): xiv. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. On the tricky workings of the “post” see Ella Shohat, “Notes on the ‘Post-Colonial’,” *Social Text,* 31/32 (1992): 99-113, Anne McClintock, “The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term ‘Post-Colonialism’,” *Social Text,* 31/32 (1992): 84-98 and Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?” *Critical Inquiry*, 17:2 (1991): 336-357, R. Radhakrishnan, “Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,” *Callaloo* 16:4 (1993): 750-771, among others. On the diverse genealogies of postcolonial criticism, see Deepika Bahri, *Native Intelligence: Aesthetics, Politics, and Postcolonial Literature* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), especially Ch.1, and Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London and New York: Verso, 1997), especially Ch. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See Ray Chow, *Ethics After Idealism: Theory-Culture-Ethnicity-Reading* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998):150-151. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Stuart Hall, “When Was ‘The Post-Colonial’? Thinking at the Limit,” *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons* (eds. Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti; London and New York: Routledge, 1996):249. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Ibid*., 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Achille Mbmebe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2001): 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Achille Mbembe, “On the Postcolony: a brief response to critics,” *African Identities*, 4:2 (2006): 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Radhakrishnan, “Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,” 762. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Homi K. Bhabha, “Introduction,” *The Location of Culture*. Reprint edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See Lingyan Yang, “Theorizing Asian America: On Asian American and Postcolonial Asian Diasporic Women Intellectuals,” *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 5:2 (2003):146. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Shohat, “Notes on the ‘Post-Colonial’,” 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Bhabha, “Introduction,” *The Location of Culture*, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Configurations*, 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Benita Parry, “Directions and Dead Ends in Postcolonial Studies,” *Relocating Postcolonialism*, (David Theo Goldberg and Ato Quayson, eds.; Wiley-Blackwell, 2002): 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. McClintock, “The Angel of Progress,” 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. David Theo Goldberg and Ato Quayson, “Introduction: Scale and Sensibility,” *Relocating Postcolonialism*, xii. Goldberg and Quayson succinctly indicate the deep linkage of the rhetorical strategy of postcolonial discourses with poststructuralist theory in that “all binary oppositions are value-laden, with the first term often implicitly assumed to have an ethical or conceptual, normative or indeed logical priority over the second,” *ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See, for example, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “In Memoriam: Edward W. Said,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East,* 23:1&2 (2003): 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *Ibid*. Goldberg and Quayson point out the paradox involved in the “foundational” role of the ethical pre-text which confronts the suspicions of metanarratives within a generally anti-foundationalist theory as a sort of ethical foundation for critique of the structures of power, *ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Appiah, “Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?” 353. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Configurations*, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Radhakrishnan, “Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,” 767. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. The recent works in this current of though include books such as Marion Grau, *Of Divine Economy: Refinancing Redemption* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), also the interdisciplinary collection *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner and Mayra Rivera, eds; St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005) which addresses a larger spectrum of theological problematic in relation to colonialism beyond feminist thought, Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox, 2006), Mayra Rivera, *The Touch of Transcendence: A Postcolonial Theology of God* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox, 2007), Susan Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence in Postcolonial Theory: A Rahnerian Theological Assessment* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Mcmillan, 2007). What is common to all these texts is the prominence of Occidentally-located diasporic theologians and feminist theologians among the authors. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Configurations,*143. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. In the May 2006 conversation between Achille Mbembe and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak on religion, theology, and politics, Mbembe advocates an interrogation of the “secular fictions at the basis of Western modernity” while Spivak demonstrates, not surprisingly, a pronounced reticence about critical engagement with religious and theological discourses (“religion is a bad word”) and reports being “terrified” by theological appropriations of her own work. See “Religion, Politics, Theology: A Conversation with Achille Mbembe,” transcription by Nichole Miller, *Boundary 2*, 34:2 (2007):149-170. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. This conceptual lineage continues from Said’s essays “Secular Criticism” and “Religious Criticism” onwards, see his *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983):1-30, 290-292. “Religion” signals a general attitude akin to “Orientalism” which function as “agent[s] of closure, shutting off human investigation, criticism, and effort in deference to the authority of the more-than-human, the supernatural, the other-worldly,” 290. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. *Postcolonial Theologies*, 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Peter L. Berger, “The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview,” *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (ed. Peter L. Berger; Washington DC and Grand Rapids, MI: Ethics and Public Policy Center and Eerdmans, 1999):2. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. This fact has been pointed out in more detail by R. Sugirtharajah, see for example his essay “Complacencies and Cul-de-sacs: Christian Theologies and Colonialism,” *Postcolonial Configurations*, 157-159, and also by Susan Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence in Postcolonial Theory*, 1-2, 196-197. Abraham succinctly points out that the elisions of religious and theological knowledge in high postcolonial theory are “comfortable” for a good number of theorists who thus “demonstrate an inability and unwillingness to provide for religious and theological agency in the quest for justice,” 197. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Michael Jagessar and Stephen Burns, “Fragments of a Postcolonial Perspective on Christian Worship,” *Worship* 80:5 (2006): 429. The step towards such an engagement – implicitly at least – is Teresa Berger’s edited collection of liturgical reflections *Dissident Daughters: Feminist Liturgies in Global* Context (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001). A more recent contribution towards sacramental discourse is by well-known Asian Jesuit theologian Aloysius Pieris, “An Asian Way to Celebrate the Eucharist,” *Worship* 81:4 (2007): 314-328, even though here too postcolonial discourse is present rather implicitly. The interdisciplinary collection *Beyond Anglicanism: The Anglican Communion in the Twenty-First Century* (Ian T. Douglas and Kwok Pui-lan, eds.; New York: Church Publishing, 2001) has contributions gesturing toward the dialogue of worship studies and postcolonial concerns. In Andrea Bieler and Luise Schottroff’s *The Eucharist: Bodies, Bread, and Resurrection* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007) the category of “colonialism/colonization” plays a prominent role even though postcolonial theory is again not explicitly engaged. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. In a larger theological context, Peter C. Phan (among others) has called attention to the risks of “inculturation” that is not aware of its colonial proclivities in “Betwixt and Between: Doing Theology with Memory and Imagination,” *Journeys at the Margin: Toward an Autobiographical Theology in American-Asian Perspective* (Peter C. Phan and Jung Young Lee, eds.; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999): 113-133 and “Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church,” *Theological Studies* 64 (2003): 495-519. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Susan Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence in Postcolonial Theory,* 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Patrick A. Kalilombe, “How Do We Share ‘Third World’ Christian Insight in Europe?” *AFER: African Ecclesial Review*, 40:1 (1998): 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. See the 2009 Meeting Agenda for the Emerging Critical Resources for Liturgical Studies at <http://www.naal-liturgy.org/seminars/postmodern/>, last accessed on November 13, 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. George Mulrain, “The Caribbean,” *An Introduction to Third World Theologies* (John Parratt, ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004):166. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. I am referring to Frantz Fanon’s notion of “Manicheanism” which for Fanon and for many currents in later postcolonial thought represent the dualistic logic of either/or. Colonialism is “the organization of a Manichean world, of a compartmentalized world.” The Manichean divide or compartmentalization of colonial world order is based on mutual exclusion between the colonizers and the colonized, and one of the parties is superfluous according to the Aristotelian logic since no conciliation is possible. In this context, the Manicheanism of the colonial system is reversed in the substituting process of decolonization – a necessarily violent event for Fanon – by the Manicheanism of the colonized. These two movements are congenitally antagonistic operating within the system of reified difference of Manichean colonial logic. See in particular Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1-7, 14-15, 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence in Postcolonial Theology*, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Rita Felski’s expression “the doxa of difference” rightly draws attention to the disproportionate enamoration of critical theory with difference as an “unassailable value in itself” whereby “difference has become doxa, a magic word of theory and politics radiant with redemptive meanings,” see “The Doxa of Difference,” *Signs* 23:1 (1997):1. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Conversing with the notions of hybridity and diaspora involves the navigation through the hazards of Parry’s lamented Humpty-Dumpty-like textual idealism which often propels these notions into elitist theoretical abstractions, divorcing them from historically specific experiences of hybridity where there is less triumph but more suffering of the displaced, the refugees, the immigrants, etc. See, among others, the already referenced R. Radhakrishnan, “Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,” Benita Parry, “Directions and Dead Ends in Postcolonial Studies,” Ella Shohat, “Notes on the ‘Post-colonial’,” as well as *Hybridity and Its Discontents: Politics, Science, Culture* (Avtar Brah and Annie E. Coombes, eds; London and New York: Routledge, 2000), Marwan M. Kraidy, *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), Virinder S. Kalra, Raminder Kaur and John Hutnyk, *Diaspora and Hybridity* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 2005), Deepika Bahri, “What Difference Does Difference Make? Hybridity Reconsidered,” *South Asian Review*, 27:1 (2006), Anjali Prabhu, *Hybridity: Limits, Transformations, Prospects* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), Simone Drichel, “The Time of Hybridity,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 34:6 (2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. See Mikhail Bakhtin’s work *Вопросы литературы и эстетики* ([Москва](http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9C%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B2%D0%B0): 1975):170-173, known in the English-speaking world as *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Michael Holquist, ed., trans., and Caryl Emerson, trans.; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981): 358-359. The other type of hybridization, related yet distinct from the historically organic or dark hybridity, is for Bakhtin the intentional or conscious hybrid. This type of hybridity, theorized explicitly in literary contexts, entails not merely two voices or accents, but socio-linguistic consciousnesses and cultural epochs that have consciously come together and are struggling within the same literary utterance, see *Вопросы литературы и эстетики,* 172. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Joel Kuortti and Jopi Nyman, “Introduction: Hybridity Today,” *Reconstructing Hybridity: Post-Colonial Studies in Transition* (Joel Kuortti and Jopi Nyman, eds.; Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007): 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Radhakrishnan observes that hybridity in its “the philosophic-bohemian sense” is “underwritten by the stable regime of western secular identity and the authenticity that goes with it, whereas post-colonial hybridity has no such guarantees: neither identity nor authenticity,” in “Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,” 755. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Kuortti and Nyman, “Introduction,” *Reconstructing Hybridity*, 15-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Sabine Broeck emphasizes that “the celebration of hybridity always threatens to get stuck in an intellectual version of bastard chique, as one of the compensations white western intellectuals have, after the nomad, the homeless, the exiled, the stranger, the tourist, the bricoleur, and the margin dweller, paraded as New World paradigms to ‘bemoan the crisis, the fragmentation and loss of the Western subject or to re-vitalize its standing,’ in Heike Paul’s words,” in “White Fatigue, or, Supplementary Notes on Hybridity,” *Reconstructing Hybridity*, 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. R. Radhakrishnan, “Race and Double-Consciousness,” *Works and Days* 45(23):24 (2006): 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Felski, “The Doxa of Difference,”12. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Bhabha, *The Loction of Culture*, 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. *Ibid*., 162, [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Homi K. Bhabha, “The Third Space,” *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (Jonathan Rutherford, ed.; London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990): 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995): 26-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Bhabha, *The Loction of Culture*, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Ien Ang, “Together-In-Difference: Beyond Diaspora, Into Hybridity,” *Asian Studies Review*, 27:2 (2003):149-150. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. *Ibid*., 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture,* 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Ascroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, “Diaspora,” *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* , Second edition (Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, eds.; London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 426. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Lingyan Yang, “Theorizing Asian America,” 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Even though she argues against seductive metaphorization, symbolic empowerment, apolitization, and dematerialization of diaspora, it seems than Lingyan Yang comes very close herself to reinforcing precisely such gestures by lining up indiscriminately the following attributes of diaspora – “dialectical critical consciousness, philosophical reflexivity… serious critical category and method, a style of critical thinking, a commitment to contemporary critical cultural studies, an insistence upon the analytical and creative cartography of geography, and a refusal to accept fixed political dogmas or critical positions,” “Theorizing Asian America,” 154. She goes on to link diaspora with feminist, progressive, socially transformative humanism taking on the “perpetually patriarchal, racialist, corporate capitalist, anti-intellectual, and hostile world,” *ibid*. Such a description would no doubt surprise and even disturb many diasporic persons. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Radhakrishnan, “Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,” 765. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Joh, *Heart of the Cross*, 70. Joh’s reflections convey the profound ambiguities of diasporic experience as the context of theological reflection. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Edward W. Said, “Reflections on Exile,” *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002): 173. Alongside “exile” as one of Said’s pivotal and most complex interpretive categories in literary and cultural criticism within his “contrapuntal” approach, to which I will turn in more detail in Part III, he elsewhere argues most sagaciously that “marginality and homelessness are not, in my opinion, to be gloried in; they are to brought to an end, so that more, and not fewer, people can enjoy the benefits of what has for centuries been denied the victims of race, class, or gender,” in “The Politics of Knowledge,” *ibid.*, 385. I do not, however, intend here to refer to Said’s “metaphorical” or “metaphysical” conceptualization of exile in which Said equates, for all practical purposes, exile with the vocation and predicament of intellectuals. See, for example, Said’s 1993 essay “Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals.” This sense of exile has certain mandarin connotations and even a postmodern privileging of mobility and restlessness projected onto it. It is beyond the scope of this project to expose the transitions and extensions between various versions of exile in Said’s work. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Radhakrishnan, “Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,” 765. Radhakrishnan insightfully points out that “the poststructuralist appropriation of the diaspora aestheticizes it as an avant-garde lifestyle based on deterritorialization,” and ultimately creates a “virtual consciousness as a form of blindness to historical realities,”*ibid*., 764. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Ato Quayson, “Introduction: Area Studies, Diaspora Studies, and Critical Pedagogies,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East,* 27:3 (2007): 587. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Kwok Pui-lan, “A Theology of Border Passage,” *Border Crossings: Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics* (D.N. Premnath, ed.; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007): 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. James Clifford, “Diasporas,” originally published in *Cultural Anthropology,* 9:3 (1994), quoted from *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, 454. I must add the categories of race, ethnicity, and generation to Clifford’s ladder of “cushioning.” [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, 235. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Radhakrishnan, “Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,” 765. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Avtar Brah makes an important point distinguishing the “homing desire” from a “desire for a ‘homeland’” and an ideology of return which some diasporas and some diasporic subjects sustain, but some do not. There are situations when “home” is more a place of terror than nostalgic longing, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996):16, 192-193. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Joh, *Heart of the Cross*, 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. David Parker, “The Chinese Takeaway and the Diasporic Habitus: Space, Time and Power Geometries,” *Un/Settled Multiculturalisms: Diasporas, Entanglements, Transruptions* (Barnor Hesse, ed.; London and New York: Zed Books, 2000):89. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. I borrow this truly intricate conclusion of Rey Chow’s essay on post-idealistic ethics and Slavoj Žižek, admittedly out of context, yet with appreciation of its fittingness for the diasporic imaginary, *Ethics After Idealism: Theory-Culture-Ethnicity-Reading* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998): 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Said, “Reflections of Exile,” 180. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. I use here Avtar Brah’s complex term “diaspora space” – not diaspora – which describes the contemporary world in its present state as the site of “entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of ‘staying put’.” This concept addresses the “global condition of culture, economics and politics as a site of ‘migrancy’ and ‘travel’” and this condition is “inhabited not only by those who have migrated and their descendents but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous,” *Cartographies of Diaspora*, 181. Even though I find Brah’s concept very pertinent and helpful, I nevertheless question the “equality” of inhabitation of diaspora space as casually utopian at the expense of the lived realities of precisely immense inequalities among diasporas themselves as well as among the “indigenous” and the “diasporic” segments of Western societies. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Emmanuel Levinas, “Trace of the Other,” *Deconstruction in Context: Literature and Philosophy* (Mark C. Taylor, ed.; Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986): 346. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)