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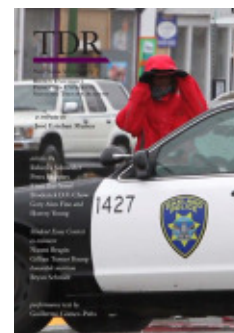
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## Toward a Topography of Cross-Cultural Theatre Praxis

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TDR: The Drama Review, Volume 46, Number 3 (T 175), Fall 2002,  
pp. 31-53 (Article)

Published by The MIT Press



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# Toward a Topography of Cross-Cultural Theatre Praxis

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*Jacqueline Lo and Helen Gilbert*

## *Introduction*

In this essay we attempt to map out a conceptual framework for analyzing a cluster of related practices subsumed under the broad banner of “cross-cultural theatre.” For the purposes of our discussion, cross-cultural theatre encompasses public performance practices characterized by the conjunction of specific cultural resources at the level of narrative content, performance aesthetics, production processes, and/or reception by an interpretive community. The cultural resources at issue may be material or symbolic, taking the form of particular objects or properties, languages, myths, rituals, embodied techniques, training methods, and visual practices—or what James Brandon calls “cultural fragments” (1990:92). Cross-cultural theatre inevitably entails a process of encounter and negotiation between different cultural sensibilities, although the degree to which this is discernible in any performance event will vary considerably depending on the artistic capital brought to a project as well as the location and working processes involved in its development and execution.

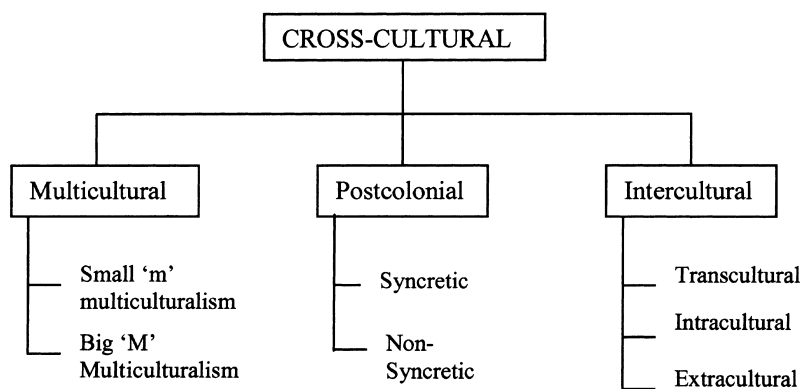
Cross-cultural work of any kind is necessarily site-specific; hence, to produce an abstracted theory of its practice may seem problematic. Nonetheless, the increasing significance of cross-cultural theatre both within the academy and the performing arts industries in the West demands that this practice be critically situated within a historicized and politicized configuration. What is at stake in such an analysis is an attempt to articulate power relationships in more overt ways and thus to foreground agency as a critical issue.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, there are distinctions between cross-cultural theories, cross-cultural discourses, and the distinct experiences of cross-cultural theatre, but in our discussion it is not always possible to keep these separate, especially since we are engaging in what James Clifford calls “a kind of ‘theorizing’ that is always embedded in particular maps and histories” (1994:302).

We are less interested in conducting a comprehensive documentation and analysis of the range of cross-cultural practices developed in recent years than in

providing an overview of current attempts to conceptualize these practices. Hence, what follows is at best a form of critical piecemeal—“provisional, interrogative, and most of all, motivated within an ongoing critical struggle over the political terrain of textual interpretation” (Slemon 1989:4). While the objective is to survey contemporary theorizing of cross-cultural theatre in the global arts market, our analysis retains a certain Australasian perspective. The schematic representations that follow are not intended to set up rigid categories of cross-cultural theatre or to suggest that the terminology in the field is, or should be, stable. We acknowledge that there is considerable leakage between the categories and that many terms take on different nuances in different sites.

Although one could argue that all theatre is in a sense cross-cultural in that performance work necessitates the negotiation of cultural differences both temporally (across history) and spatially (across geographical and social categories), what dominates critical and institutional interest in cross-cultural experimentation has been the encounters between the West and “the rest.” This Western fascination with non-Western performing arts has a long history, beginning in the early part of the 20th century and intensifying over the past three decades. Despite the apparent trendiness of cross-cultural work—as witnessed on the international festival circuit, in actor training institutions, and in academic discourse—there is not yet an integrated body of theory that sets up the perimeters of the field of cross-cultural theatrical practice. With the exception of Richard Schechner’s pioneering work and Patrice Pavis’s more recently developed model of intercultural theatre, most of the existing critical work tends to concentrate on particular instances of cultural exchange. Viewed collectively, the various attempts to conceptualize the field reveal a contested terrain where even the terminologies are woolly, to say the least.

Jonathan Dollimore’s reminder that “to cross is not only to traverse, but to mix (as in to cross-breed) and to contradict (as in to cross someone)” (1991:288) suggests some of the possibilities for cross-cultural theatre to radicalize and intervene in hegemonic arts practices. One of the most popular manifestations of this generative conception of cross-cultural encounter is the idea of the hybrid (art form, culture, and/or identity). But “to cross” can also imply deception or misrepresentation, as in to “double-cross,” while other kinds of crossings, such as territorial invasion or war, for instance, can also be unwelcome. With this contradictory semantic field in mind, we use cross-cultural theatre as a general umbrella term which encompasses a range of theatrical practices that might be schematized as follows:



*Diagram 1: Types of Cross-Cultural Theatre*

## Multicultural Theatre

“Multicultural” and “multiculturalism” carry site-specific meanings. Countries such as Australia and Canada, where multiculturalism is an official federal policy, have very different experiences and strategies of managing cultural diversity in comparison to the United States and Britain where multiculturalism remains largely a community-generated consciousness that has come to influence state management.<sup>2</sup> Ien Ang and Jon Stratton have summarized the key structural difference between Australian and U.S. formations of multiculturalism:

In the U.S., the politicisation of multiculturalism has been largely from the bottom up, its stances advanced by minority groups (African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans and so on) who regard themselves as excluded from the American mainstream (and for whom the multiculturalist idea acts as an affirmation of that exclusion), while in Australia, multiculturalism is a centre piece of official governmental policy, that is, a top-bottom political strategy implemented by those in power precisely to improve the inclusion of ethnic minorities within national Australian culture. (1994:126)

Canadian multiculturalism shares many similarities with its Australian counterpart, with the significant exception that indigenous cultures feature prominently in the Canadian model whereas Australian multiculturalism is still dominated by the discourse of immigration, which has the effect of positioning indigenous concerns outside the multicultural paradigm. In Britain, by contrast, multiculturalism functions more as a descriptive term for the interaction among major ethnic groupings in ways that resemble the U.S. situation. These differences partly account for the different degrees to which the various countries invest in multiculturalism as an element of their national identity. The imperatives of multicultural policy have influenced not only the material practice of cross-cultural theatre but also its critical reception. In Australia and Canada, multicultural theatre has come to signify a specific cluster of artistic practices, often supported under the state-sanctioned rubric of community development, which has generated a defined body of critical literature. By contrast, in the U.S. the most prominent ethnic theatres (Asian American, African American, and Hispanic) have not been integrated to the same extent under an overarching framework of the “multicultural.”

Broadly speaking, there are two major types of multicultural theatre: small “m” multicultural theatre and big “M” multicultural theatre.

*Small “m” multicultural theatre* refers to theatre works featuring a racially mixed cast that do not actively draw attention to cultural differences among performers or to the tensions between the text and the production content. One of the most common strategies of small “m” multicultural theatre is to use nontraditional or “blind casting”—usually in productions of canonical plays staged for a mainstream audience—to signal a commitment to cultural pluralism. While such casting opens up employment opportunities for minority-group actors, it is a politically conservative practice that gives the appearance of diversity without necessarily confronting the hegemony of the dominant culture.

In this respect, Benny Ambush argues that color-blind casting does not allow actors to bring what is special about them to their roles but rather “whitewashes aesthetically different people,” inviting spectators to think that racial and/or cultural specificities do not “matter” (1989:5). Used uncritically, multicultural casting strategies have the effect of sustaining a familiar view of the world by subsuming

the defamiliarizing potential created by the lack of “fit” between actor and role into the normative conventions of Western theatrical realism.<sup>3</sup>

Another common theatrical form included in the small “m” multicultural category is folkloric display, a performance practice that showcases specific cultural art forms in discrete categories, often within a festival model. Based primarily on the fetishization of cultural difference, folkloric theatre trades in notions of history, tradition, and authenticity in order to gain recognition for the cultural capital of disenfranchised groups. But, as Gareth Griffiths warns, authenticity has its own traps; it “may overwrite and overdetermine the full range of representations” through which community identities are articulated (1994:72) and “disavow possibilities of hybridized subjects” (1994:76). Folkloricization allows for a selective past but not a present or a future. According to David Carter, instead of a mode of interaction, it presents “a model of performance/observation, [of] object/subject” (1986:5).<sup>4</sup>

Big “M” multicultural theatre is generally a counterdiscursive practice that aims to promote cultural diversity, access to cultural expression, and participation in the symbolic space of the national narrative. Its processes and products are informed by an expressed agenda that speaks to a politics of marginality.<sup>5</sup> Canada and Australia have well-established track records in this form of theatre, largely because official multiculturalism has played an increasingly significant role in nation-building since the 1970s. This is not to say that all big “M” multicultural theatre practice is cross-cultural, as the following discussion of ghetto theatre demonstrates.

Several types of theatre practice fall under the broad category of big “M” multicultural theatre: ghetto theatre, migrant theatre, and community theatre.<sup>6</sup> *Ghetto theatre* tends to be monocultural; it is staged for and by a specific ethnic community and is usually communicated in the language/s of that community. The political efficacy of this type of multicultural intervention is arguably limited since the performances are largely “in-house” and tend to focus on narratives about origins and loss. Much ghetto theatre is infused with a nostalgic privileging of the homeland (real or imagined) as seen from a diasporic perspective, with the result that more radical cross-cultural negotiations are muted.

*Migrant theatre* is centrally concerned with narratives of migration and adaptation, often using a combination of ethno-specific languages to denote cultural in-between-ness. Cross-cultural negotiation is more visible in migrant theatre where there is an emerging exploration of cultural hybridity reflected in aesthetic form as well as narrative content. While one cultural group is usually responsible for the production and staging of migrant theatre, it frequently plays not only to that group but also to wider audiences, albeit to a lesser extent; hence cross-cultural negotiations may also occur at the level of reception.

*Community theatre* is characterized by social engagement; it is theatre primarily committed to bringing about actual change in specific communities. This focus on cultural activism is seen as an oppositional practice concerned with subverting those “dominant cultural practices which render people passive [as] consumers” of imposed cultural commodities (Watt 1991:63). A commitment to cultural democracy distinguishes community theatre from other types of community-generated performances that go under the general rubric of “amateur” theatre. The aesthetics of community theatre are shaped by the culture of its audience.<sup>7</sup> The constitution of the performance group and the subject matter may be organized around common interests (such as gender, ethnicity, or shared social experiences) or defined in terms of geographical location. Multicultural community theatre generally incorporates a range of languages and cultural resources, including performing traditions, drawn from the community. Community arts

workers are often employed to facilitate the work and the performances are typically presented back to the community as well as to “outsiders.” Cross-cultural negotiations therefore occur at a number of levels in this type of theatre.

### *Postcolonial Theatre*

While “postcolonial theatre” has sometimes been used as a portmanteau descriptor for performance work expressing any kind of resistance politics, particularly concerning race, class, and/or gender oppression, the term more often refers to a range of theatre texts and practices that have emerged from cultures subjected to Western imperialism.<sup>8</sup> In its more narrowly focused definition, postcolonial theatre is a geopolitical category designating both a historical and a discursive relation to imperialism, whether that phenomenon is treated critically or ambivalently (see Gilbert and Tompkins 1996:2–7). The discursive axis of postcolonial theatre—that it engages with imperialism in either explicit or implicit ways—moves away from concepts of a naïve teleological sequence in which postcolonialism merely supersedes colonialism. Hence, specific theatre practices are deemed postcolonial not simply because of their cultural origins but also because of their textual and performative features. While the best known postcolonial theatre derives from indigenous groups in areas formerly colonized by European and/or American cultures, some settler theatre in such regions is included (if sometimes contentiously) in this category.<sup>9</sup>

Most postcolonial theatre is driven by a political imperative to interrogate the cultural hegemony that underlies imperial systems of governance, education, social and economic organization, and representation. Its discourses of resistance speak primarily to the colonizing projects of Western imperial centers and/or to the neocolonial pressures of local/regional postindependence regimes. Resistance is expressed in genres ranging from realism, agitprop, and forum theatre to political satires and allegories where criticism of various “sensitive” issues may be “muted” to avoid the censorship of a politically repressive government or ruling class. In this context, resistance is not conceptualized as pure or simply there/available in texts or social practices; rather it is grounded in multiple and sometimes contradictory structures, never easily located because it is partial, incomplete, ambiguous, and often complicit in the apparatus it seeks to transgress. The notion of resistance as unstable and potentially ambivalent strengthens the case for the inclusion of some settler theatre in the postcolonial category since, as Stephen Slemon maintains, postcolonialism is concerned with “the project of articulating the forms—and modes and tropes and figures—of anti-colonial textual resistance, wherever they occur, and in all their guises” (1990:35).

Postcolonial theatre usually involves cross-cultural negotiation at the dramaturgical and aesthetic levels because of the historical contact between cultures. Cross-cultural processes may also be an important part of the working practices, especially in regions with bicultural or multicultural populations. While not all postcolonial theatre is necessarily cross-cultural, it frequently assumes some kind of interpretive encounter between differently empowered cultural groups. In terms of reception, audiences for postcolonial theatre are complex, typically varying across geographical regions while being differentially influenced by class and race. For instance, Aboriginal theatre in Australia plays primarily to the dominant “white” culture while Wole Soyinka’s work finds its main audience among the educated classes of Nigerian society as well as among cosmopolitan groups internationally.

Postcolonial theatre has been discussed under two main categories: syncretic theatre and nonsyncretic theatre. *Syncretic theatre* integrates performance elements

of different cultures into a form that aims to retain the cultural integrity of the specific materials used while forging new texts and theatre practices.<sup>10</sup> This integrative process tends to highlight rather than disguise shifts in the meaning, function, and value of cultural fragments as they are moved from their traditional contexts. In postcolonial societies, syncretic theatre generally involves the incorporation of indigenous material into a Western dramaturgical framework, which is itself modified by the fusion process. Christopher Balme argues that such syncretism activates a “cultural and aesthetic semiotic recoding that ultimately questions the basis of normative Western drama”; this creative endeavor is to be distinguished from “theatrical exoticism,” in which “indigenous cultural texts are arbitrarily recoded and semanticised in a Western aesthetic and ideological frame” where they tend to signify mere alterity (1999:4–5). Well-known examples of syncretic postcolonial theatre include works by Sistren Theatre Collective and Derek Walcott in the Caribbean, Girish Karnad in India, and Wole Soyinka and Femi Osofisan in Nigeria. A significant number of Aboriginal, Maori, and native North American plays also use syncretic performance strategies as part of their larger agenda of cultural recuperation.

*Nonsyncretic theatre*, by definition, does not merge disparate cultural forms but rather uses imposed imperial genres/aesthetics or, less often, wholly indigenous ones, to voice postcolonial concerns. For instance, Western-style realism has been widely used to stage anticolonial narratives emanating from both indigenous and settler communities. Among the latter, Australia’s Louis Nowra and Canada’s Sharon Pollock figure as high-profile playwrights whose work could be characterized as postcolonial but not syncretic. The distinction between syncretic and nonsyncretic theatre is more difficult to maintain in cases, such as indigenous performances of Shakespearian texts, where European characters are enacted by “black” or “colored” actors, instituting tension between the performance at issue and the tradition that it transgresses. It could be argued here that syncretism inheres in the juxtaposition of the performers’ bodies (as culturally coded sign-systems) to scripts ineluctably embedded with markers of a different culture. This example suggests that postcolonial theatre is best conceptualized as exhibiting varying degrees of syncretism rather than falling neatly into opposing categories.

### *Intercultural Theatre*

Whereas multicultural theatre is often the effect of state-determined cultural management and/or a grassroots response to the “lived reality” of cultural pluralism, and postcolonial theatre is produced as part of (and in opposition to) a historical process of imperialism and neoimperialism, intercultural theatre is characterized as a “voluntarist intervention circumscribed by the agencies of the state and the market” (Bharucha 2000:33). Multicultural theatre functions within a statist framework premised on ideals of citizenship and the management of cultural/ethnic difference, while intercultural theatre and, to a certain extent postcolonial theatre, have more latitude to explore and critique alternative forms of citizenship and identity across and beyond national boundaries, although the subjectivities they produce are not wholly free of state mediation. Put simply, intercultural theatre is a hybrid derived from an intentional encounter between cultures and performing traditions. It is primarily a Western-based tradition with a lineage in modernist experimentation through the work of Tairov, Meyerhold, Brecht, Artaud, and Grotowski. More recently, intercultural theatre has been associated with the works of Richard Schechner, Peter Brook, Eugenio Barba, Ariane Mnouchkine, Robert Wilson, Tadashi Suzuki, and Ong Keng Sen. Even when intercultural exchanges take place within the “non-West,” they are often



mediated through Western culture and/or economics. Ong's "Pan-Asian" spectacles, *LEAR* (1997) and *Desdemona* (1999), are cases in point (see De Reuck 2000; and Grehan 2000).

One only has to refer to Pavis's *The Intercultural Performance Reader* (1996) to appreciate the range of approaches encompassed by the term, "interculturalism," and the extent to which it evades any neat definition. While attempting to map developments in the field, *The Reader* documents diverse positions that foreground interculturalism as a contested site for both theory and practice. Despite this apparent diversity, there is evidence pointing to interculturalism as a Western vision of exchange. Pavis himself acknowledges this bias, explaining that the collection was "largely produced by and aimed at a European and Anglo-American readership" (1996:25). The privileging of the West is evident in the ways in which the essays are grouped within the book: for instance, the juxtapositioning of Part II, titled "Intercultural Performance from the Western Point of View," with Part III, "Intercultural Performance from Another Point of View," replicates the "West and the rest" binary paradigm and reveals a problematic ideological aporia. Put differently, interculturalism, as it has been theorized and documented thus far, is already overdetermined by the West.

Although Pavis, echoing Erika Fischer-Lichte, claims that it is too soon to propose a global theory of interculturalism (1996:1), there already exists a globalizing practice that demands further political and ethical interrogation. Similarly, Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins (2000) contend that intercultural theatre is too varied and process-based to warrant a general theory. They opt instead for a site-specific study of intercultural projects. But this reluctance to engage with the "big picture" arguably runs the risk of consolidating the ideological premises of interculturalism as a Western-dominated form of knowledge production. By privileging content specificity, the false dichotomy between praxis and theory is maintained; this also has the effect of relegating issues of ethics to the particular and the "one off" rather than relating these to larger issues of knowledge formation within institutional, national, and global contexts.

Our study of a range of intercultural practice and the theoretical discussion it has generated suggests that the field can be loosely divided into three subcategories:

*Transcultural theatre* aims to transcend culture-specific codification in order to reach a more universal human condition. Transcultural directors are interested in particularities and traditions only insofar as they enable the directors to identify aspects of commonality rather than difference (Pavis 1996:6). There are many variations to this search for the universal. In the case of Peter Brook, transcendence of the particular is a necessary part of the mythic quest for origins and Western theatre's supposed loss of "purity." This return to sources and the reappropriation of primitive languages is a metaphysical quest for a truth that holds everywhere and at any time, irrespective of historical or cultural differences. In *Orghast* (1970), for instance, Brook attempted to create an original tonal language by tapping into a primeval consciousness. Eugenio Barba's work in ISTA (International School of Theatre Anthropology) is another form of transcultural theatre. Pavis distinguishes Barba's work as "pre-cultural"; it does not aim to identify the common origins of cultures in Brook's way, but rather seeks what is common to "Eastern" and "Western" theatre practitioners before they become individualized or "acculturated" in particular traditions and techniques of performance (1996:7). According to Barba, the goal is to compare the work methods of both Eastern and Western theatre, and "to reach down into a common technical substratum" which is "the domain of pre-expressivity [...]. At this pre-expressive level, the principles are the same, even though they nurture the enormous expressive dif-



ferences which exist between one tradition and another, one actor and another” (1996:220). Barba stresses that these principles are analogous to one another rather than homologous; nevertheless, his search for an essence beyond socialization is characteristic of the desire to transcend social and cultural “trappings” in a move toward a “purer” mode of communication and theatrical presence.

*Intracultural theatre* is Rustom Bharucha’s term to denote cultural encounters between and across specific communities and regions within the nation-state. More specifically, in relation to his own “intracultural” work, Bharucha points to internal diversity within the boundaries of a particular region or nation. This sense of the intracultural has similarities to the multicultural,

insofar as they assume either the interaction or the coexistence of regional and local cultures within the larger framework of the nation-state. However, while the “intra” prioritizes the interactivity and translation of diverse cultures, the “multi” upholds a notion of cohesiveness. (Bharucha 2000:9)

In this way, intracultural theatre serves a critical function in challenging “organicist notions of culture by highlighting the deeply fragmented and divided society [...] that multicultural rhetoric of the state refuses to acknowledge” (Bharucha 2000:9).

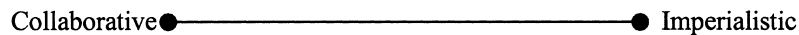
*Extracultural theatre* refers to theatre exchanges that are conducted along a West-East and North-South axis. The converse of intraculturalism, this form of interculturalism goes back to the modernist pioneers who looked to the non-West to rejuvenate Western art. Schechner is the best-known contemporary exponent of this practice, his experimental productions dating back to the late 1960s with the staging of a West Irian birth ritual in *Dionysus in 69* (1968), and subsequently developing through numerous theatre projects and theoretical essays in the field.<sup>11</sup> While extracultural theatre can encompass some forms of transcultural theatre, as in Brook’s *Mahabharata* (1985), it also includes intercultural experiments, which do not aim to relativize or transcend cultural differences but rather to celebrate and even interrogate such differences as a source of cultural empowerment and aesthetic richness. As a category of analysis, extracultural theatre always begs questions about the power dynamics inherent in the economic and political location of the participating cultures, even if such questions are evaded in accounts of actual practice.

The remainder of this essay will focus primarily on this extracultural form of intercultural theatre.

### *Modes of Conducting Intercultural Theatre*

The range of working methods employed in intercultural theatre can generally be positioned along a continuum. One pole of the continuum is characterized by a collaborative mode of exchange while the opposite pole is characterized as imperialistic. Most intercultural theatre occurs somewhere between these two extremes and specific projects may shift along the continuum depending on the phase of cultural production. It is vital that the continuum is conceived in processual rather than fixed terms in order to foreground intercultural exchange as a dynamic process rather than a static transaction.

Diagram 2: Continuum of Intercultural Modes



*Collaborative*

Intercultural exchange at this end of the continuum tends to emphasize the processes and politics of exchange rather than the theatrical product per se. This form of theatre-making places great importance on cultural negotiations at all levels, from the highly personal and individualistic to the “superstructural” and institutional. Collaborative interculturalism is often community-generated rather than market and/or state-driven. There is less of a focus on maintaining the “purity” of the various cultures for exotic display. The exchange process is often marked by tension and incommensurability. While there is a general desire to maintain equitable power relations between partners, the aim is not to produce a harmonious experience of theatre-making but rather to explore the fullness of cultural exchange in all its contradictions and convergences for all parties. The theatre product may similarly resist forced synthesis, revealing instead both the positive and negative aspects of the encounter.<sup>12</sup> Ferdinand Ortiz’s concept of transculturation (not to be confused with transculturalism) offers a useful way of analyzing collaborative interculturalism by going beyond a model of easy fusion to account for both acquisition and loss at the same time. In the transculturation process, elements of each system of culture are lost in the creation of a third system. Cultural encounter of this kind can be potentially counterhegemonic; it allows minor cultures to act on dominant ones rather than merely submit to cultural loss in the transaction (see Taylor 1991:62–63).

*Imperialistic*

Intercultural exchange at this end of the continuum is often driven by a sense of Western culture as bankrupt and in need of invigoration from the non-West. The resulting theatre tends to tap into “Other” cultural traditions that are perceived as “authentic” and uncontaminated by (Western) modernity. Intercultural practice in this mode is largely an aesthetic response to cultural diversity. There is a discernible difference in agency between partners; such inequity is often historically based and may continue in the present through economic, political, and technological dominance. This form of theatre tends to be product-oriented and usually produced for the dominant culture’s consumption. Performances are often highly spectacular with emphasis placed on the aesthetic and formal qualities of the *mise-en-scène*. The intercultural work of practitioners such as Ariane Mnouchkine has been described as imperialist, though Mnouchkine refutes this charge, preferring to see her appropriations of Asian performing traditions as a form of indebtedness and “homage.” Maria Shevtsova defends this position by asserting that Mnouchkine does not purport to use the “original” art form and that her “borrowing” practices should be understood within the logic of her Western system of aestheticism (1997:102).

*Responses to Interculturalism*

Given the range of intercultural modalities, it is not surprising that critical/theoretical responses are similarly varied. Generally speaking most commentators have analyzed interculturalism as practice, their responses ranging from the celebratory to the highly critical. Schechner’s earlier writings about intercultural practice exemplify many aspects of the celebratory stance.<sup>13</sup> Schechner refers to the intercultural experimentations in the U.S. from the 1950s to the mid ’70s as a “golden age of innocence”:

People didn’t question too much whether or not this interculturalism [...] was a continuation of colonialism, a further exploitation of other cultures.

There was something simply celebratory about discovering how diverse the world was, how many performance genres there were and how we could enrich our own experience by borrowing, stealing, exchanging. (1982:19)

This neoliberal embrace of cultural difference celebrates the possibilities of cultural fusion and the construction of radical subjectivities beyond national and ethnic boundaries. Intercultural practice in this sense is deeply imbricated in globalization and the perceived deterritorialization of social, cultural, and political boundaries for those in the developed world, even if this is not often acknowledged by the critics and practitioners themselves.<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that Schechner's position has shifted significantly since then;<sup>15</sup> over the last decade in particular, his critical work shows less of a tendency to idealize cross-cultural exchange, and a keener awareness of power relations. He also acknowledges the:

misunderstandings, broken languages, and failed transactions that occur when and where cultures collide, overlap, or pull away from each other. These are seen not as obstacles to be overcome but as fertile rifts or eruptions full of creative potential. (1991:3)

At the other end of the scale is the ethical critique of intercultural practice as invasive globalization. Daryl Chin argues that:

Interculturalism hinges on the questions of autonomy and empowerment. To deploy elements from the symbol system of another culture is a very delicate enterprise. In its crudest terms, the question is: when does that usage act as cultural imperialism? Forcing elements from disparate cultures together does not seem to be a solution that makes much sense, aesthetically, ethically, or philosophically. What does that prove: that the knowledge of other cultures exists? That information about other cultures now is readily available? (1991:94)

For Bharucha, likewise, interculturalism cannot be separated from a larger history of colonialism and orientalism (see also Dasgupta 1991). He contends that interculturalism is an inherently ethnocentric practice which seeks to synthesize cultural difference rather than respect its individual histories:

The problem arises [...] when the preoccupation with the "self" overpowers the representation of "other" cultures [...and] when the Other is not another but the projection of one's ego. Then all one has is a glorification of the self and a co-option of other cultures in the name of representation. (1993:28)

John Russell Brown adds:

Exchange, borrowing, trade, or looting across major frontiers diminishes any theatre because it transgresses its inherited reliance on the society from which the drama takes its life and for which it was intended to be performed. [...] However worthily it is intended, intercultural theatrical exchange is, in fact, a form of pillage, and the result is fancy-dress pretence, or at best, the creation of a small zoo in which no creature has its full life. (1998:14)

Such moral critiques, while absolutely essential to the politicizing of interculturalism, risk instigating a kind of paralysis insofar as they suggest that virtually no form of theatrical exchange can be ethical.<sup>16</sup> This position is clearly untenable for a number of practitioners, especially those whose art is derived from (and aims to explore) experiences of cultural hybridity. For instance, performance artist/theorist Guillermo Gómez-Peña, a self-confessed “child of crisis and cultural syncretism” (1993:38), sees his own work (and the desirable future of American theatre) as inevitably pluralistic, unavoidably intercultural. But he is also acutely aware of the implications of intercultural work, noting that it is “fundamental to address relationships of power and assumptions about privilege among the participating artists, communities, and countries” in order to develop ethical models of theatrical exchange (1996:9). To facilitate this, Gómez-Peña calls for a much more rigorous public debate about cultural issues in general, about equity and diversity, about definitions of “multi-, inter-, intra-, and cross-cultural,” about which encounters between cultures are “symmetrical and desirable and which are more reactionary” (1993:57). In projects such as *Temple of Confessions* (1994), *A Seminar on Museum Race Relations* (1995), and *Mexterminator Project* (1999)—deliberately provocative works that are at times even “unethical”—Gómez-Peña relentlessly stages aspects of this debate, always avoiding definitive answers.

### *Theoretical Models of Interculturalism*

While many critics have posed theoretical challenges to the intercultural enterprise, there have been surprisingly few attempts to formulate a comprehensive model of intercultural exchange. Marvin Carlson has offered a scale consisting of seven categories of cross-cultural influence based on “possible relationships between the culturally familiar and the culturally foreign” (1990:50). While useful for differentiating types of projects, this scale does not move beyond an essentially taxonomic analysis of the field. Fischer-Lichte takes a different tack, focusing specifically on the adaptation process, which, she insists, follows a model of “productive reception” rather than one of translation (1997:154–55). Productive reception emphasizes aspects of a performance caused or influenced by reception and is aligned in Fischer-Lichte’s work with the project of revitalizing tired theatrical practices, though she does not elaborate on the precise dynamics involved.

Pavis has thus far been the only critic able to sustain a comprehensive model of intercultural exchange. His hourglass model depicts, in its upper bowl, the foreign or source culture, “which is more or less codified and solidified in diverse anthropological, sociocultural or artistic modelizations” (1992:4). This is represented by filters 1 and 2 in the diagram below. The “grains of culture” trickle down to the lower bowl and are rearranged in the process. The filters 3 through 11, put in place by the target culture and the observer, largely determine the final formation of the grains.<sup>17</sup> The model focuses on “the intercultural transfer between source and target culture” as a way of depicting the relativity of the notion of culture and the complicated relationship between partners in the exchange (1992:5).

### *Critique of the Hourglass Model*

In practice, Pavis’s hourglass is an accurate model of most intercultural work of the extracultural kind. But the model’s strength is also its weakness: it cannot account for alternative and more collaborative forms of intercultural exchange. Despite Pavis’s wariness of a translation/communication model of interculturalism, his elaboration of the process of cultural transfer reveals its dependence on

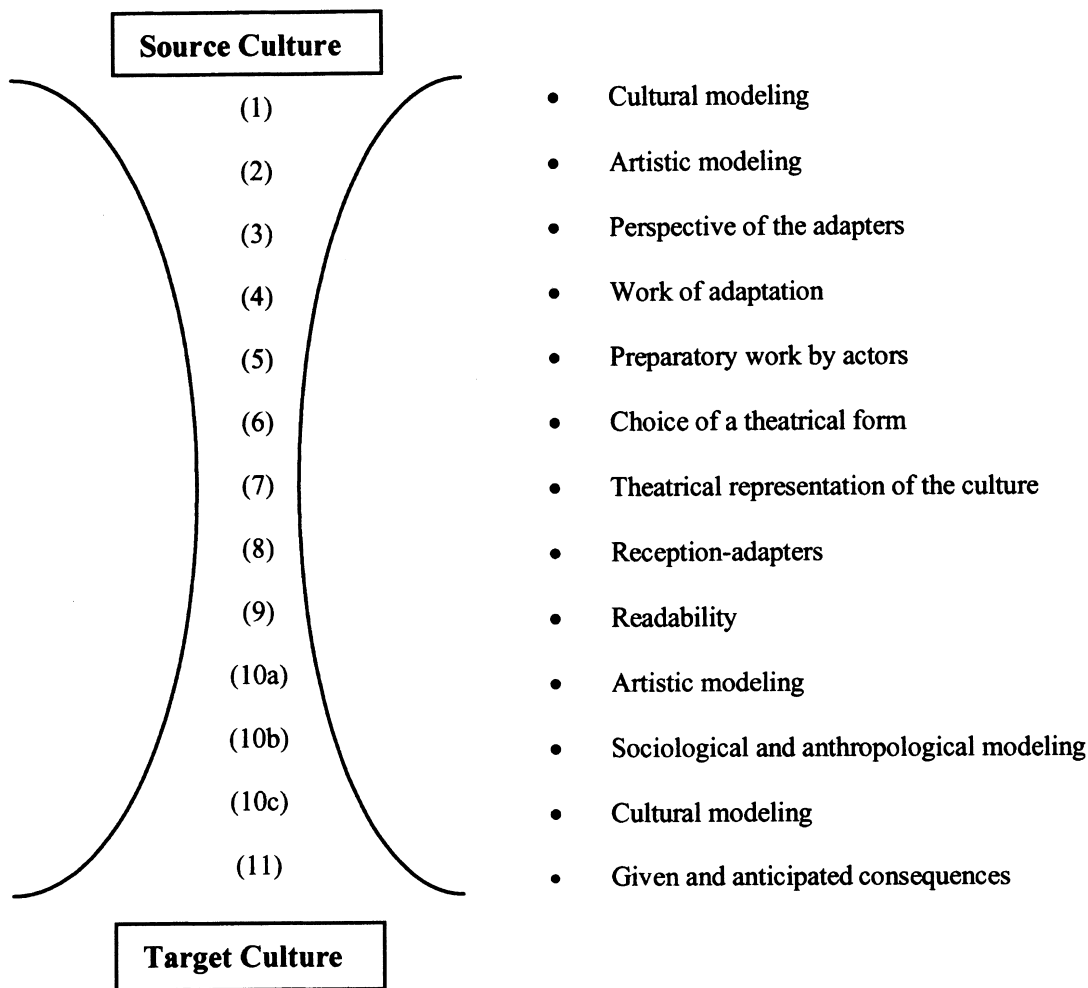


Diagram 3: Pavis's hourglass Model of Intercultural Theatre

translation theory. The main problem with this model is that it assumes a one-way cultural flow based on a hierarchy of privilege, even though Pavis attempts to relativize the power relations by claiming that the hourglass can be turned upside-down “as soon as the users of a foreign culture ask themselves how they can communicate their own culture to another target culture” (1992:5). This, however, assumes that there is a “level-playing field” between the partners in the exchange and does not account for the fact that the benefits of globalization and the permeability of cultures and political systems are accessed differentially for different communities and nations.

A translation model of interculturalism therefore runs the risk of reproducing strategies of containment. As Tejaswini Niranjana points out:

By employing certain modes of representing the other—which it thereby also brings into being—translation reinforces hegemonic versions of the colonized, helping them acquire the status of what Edward Said calls representations, or objects without history. (1992:3)

Pavis is not unaware of this danger:

If [the hourglass] is only a mill, it will blend the source culture, destroy its every specificity and drop into the lower bowl an inert and deformed substance which will have lost its original modeling without being molded into that of the target culture. If it is only a funnel, it will indiscriminately absorb the initial substance without reshaping it through the series of filters or leaving any trace of the original matter. (1992:5)

Having said this, however, Pavis is unable to account for interculturalism as a process of political negotiation. For example, he argues that the *mise-en-scène*, as the central site of interculturalism, functions as a “kind of *réglage* (‘fine-tuning’)” which mediates between different contexts, cultural backgrounds, and traditions (1992:6). “Fine-tuning” serves to smooth over differences in ways that become intelligible for the target culture. Similarly, “reception-adapters” (filter 8) fill the lacunae in the transfer of cultural content and dissipate the tensions of incommensurability in order to create a “readable” text for the target culture.

The teleology of the hourglass model ultimately reduces intercultural exchange to an alimentary process. According to this logic, the body belongs to the target culture while the source culture becomes the food which must be digested and assimilated. As Pavis notes, only the grains that are “sufficiently fine” will “flow through [the hourglass neck] without any trouble” (1992:4). His model cannot account for blockage, collisions, and retroaction as sites of either intervention or resistance. In the final analysis, intercultural exchange according to the hourglass model is a reductive process which distills cultural difference into essences that can be readily absorbed by the target culture. While Pavis does acknowledge the influence of the social context (filters 10B and 10C), the temporally bound metaphor of the hourglass suggests that sociohistorical factors, rather than inflecting the entire intercultural process, simply constitute the final filter before the theatrical product is consumed by the target culture. In short, the hourglass model is premised on aesthetics rather than on politics.

Pavis does not stray far from this model in his more recent theorization of the field (1996), proffering instead a more careful schematization of different forms and modes of intercultural practice. Although he does acknowledge the problematics of power inequities between partners in the exchange, noting that “there can be no sense in which Asian perspectives are always reversible and symmetrical with those of the West—as a purely functionalist use of the hourglass, turned over and over ad infinitum, might lead us naively to believe” (1996:2), there is little sense that he has revised the translation principles underlying his model.<sup>18</sup> Pavis takes account of some of the recent ethical critiques of interculturalism, and is particularly wary of it being absorbed into a postmodernist form of cultural relativism. Although he claims that “exchange implies a theory and an ethics of alterity” (1996:11), he does not foreground the ethical dimension in any discernible way. Significantly, Pavis claims that the kind of intercultural practice that holds the most potential for “resistance against standardization, against the Europeanization of super-productions” is the “inter-corporeal work, in which an actor confronts his/her technique and professional identity with those of the others” (1996:150). By locating the potential for agency at this microscopic level of actor training, Pavis reveals the limitations of the hourglass model as an effective template for a politicized theorization of the entire field of interculturalism.

### *Matrixing Interculturalism and Postcolonialism*

One way of approaching the problems raised by Pavis’s model of intercultural theatre is to consider its mechanisms through the lens of postcolonial theory.

Despite their shared concern with the phenomenon of cultural encounter, theories of interculturalism and postcolonialism have thus far developed as more or less asymmetrical discourses, the former having roots in theatre anthropology (via Victor Turner) and semiotics, the latter in literary and cultural studies, as well as in psychoanalysis (via Frantz Fanon) and poststructuralism. Of the two discourses, postcolonial theory has been the most consistently political, taking as its primary imperative the task of exposing and redressing unequal power relationships between cultures, whereas interculturalism has concerned itself more often with the aesthetics of cultural transfer. What postcolonial theory offers to current debates about interculturalism is a framework for analyzing such thorny issues as agency, hybridity, and authenticity, issues that lie at the heart of intercultural praxis. With its insistent stress on historicity and specificity, postcolonial theory offers ways of relocating the dynamics of intercultural theatre within identifiable fields of sociopolitical and historical relations. This contextualizing enables us to ask, at any point in the production and reception processes of intercultural work, questions about individual and collective power: Whose economic and/or political interests are being served? How is the working process represented to the target audience, and why? Who is the target audience and how can differences be addressed within this constituency? How does a specific intercultural event impact on the wider sociopolitical environment?

The term “intercultural” suggests an exploration of the interstice between cultures; it draws our attention to the hyphenated third space separating and connecting different peoples. The act of crossing cultures (with reference to Dollimore’s notions of travesty, hybridity, and conflict) should ideally activate both centrifugal and centripetal forces in the process of mutual contamination and interaction. This is an aspect which Pavis’s unilinear model of interculturalism cannot take into account. We would therefore like to propose an alternative model of intercultural exchange, which, for the purposes of this essay, focuses on the “big picture” and uses some of Pavis’s categories and terminologies. Our model is both a template for an intercultural practice that encourages more mutuality and an attempted representation of the mutuality that has already existed at some level, even if it has been limited and nonreflexive, indeed suppressed in much theorizing of particular projects. Our aim is to adapt what is essentially an appropriative/assimilationist model into a more collaborative/negotiated one. The model we have in mind draws inspiration from a toy we used to play with as children in both Malaysia and Australia. The toy consisted of a piece of elastic strung through the middle of a plastic disc. The elastic string is held at each end with the disc supported in the center. By rotating the hands in a circular motion, the disc is rotated outward. Once the disc is rotating, the elastic is alternately tightened and released to continue the spinning of the disc. The disc moves in either direction along the string depending on whether the tension is generated by the left or the right hand.

In our model, intercultural exchange is represented as a two-way flow. Both partners are considered cultural sources while the target culture is positioned along the continuum between them. The location of the target culture is not fixed: its position remains fluid and, depending on where and how the exchange process takes place, shifts along the continuum. For instance, if the performance takes place in the domain of source culture B, then the position of the target culture moves closer to source B’s end of the continuum. This fluidity not only foregrounds the dialogic nature of intercultural exchange but also takes into account the possibility of power disparity in the partnership.

Both source cultures bring to the theatrical project cultural apparatuses shaped by their respective sociocultural milieu (filters 1 and 2), and both undergo a series of transformations and challenges in the process of exchange (filters 3 through 9),



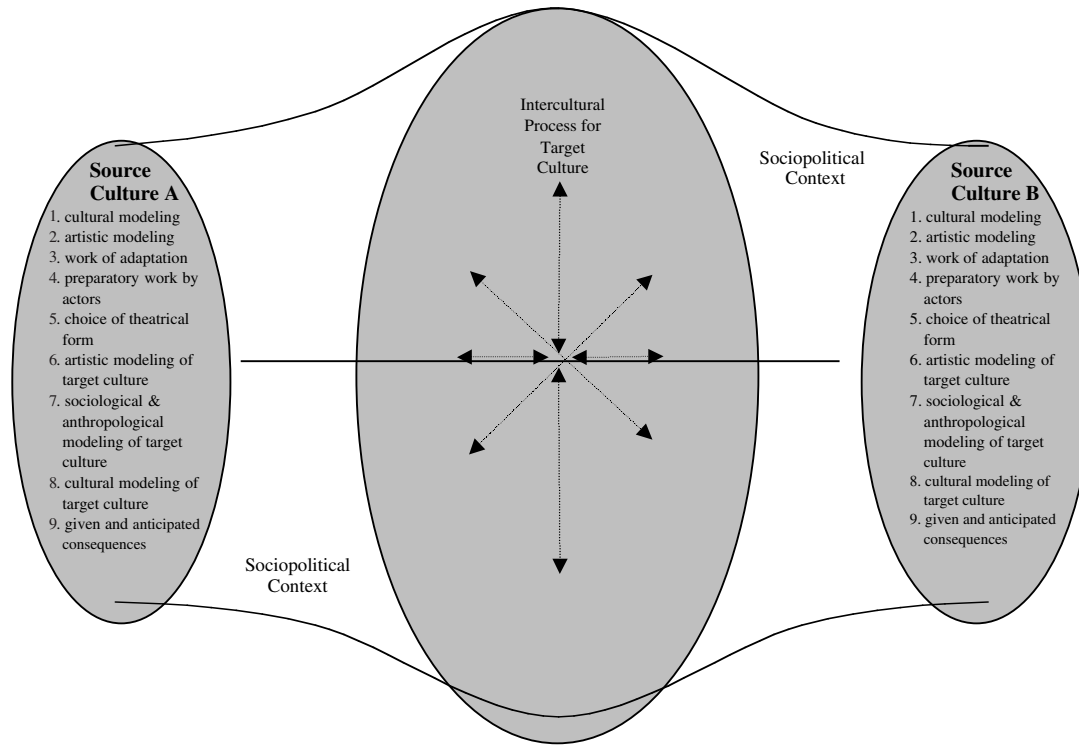


Diagram 4: Proposed Model for Interculturalism

in relation to each other and in anticipation of the target culture. Even if the target culture is aligned with one of the source cultures, both partners still undergo a similar process of filtration and hybridization, however differently experienced. Positioned at the tension between source cultures, intercultural exchange is characterized both by gain and by loss, attraction and disavowal. This dialogism is represented by the centrifugal and centripetal forces indicated in the diagram above. The proposed model locates all intercultural activity within an identifiable sociopolitical context. This serves not only to foreground the inseparability of artistic endeavors from sociopolitical relations but also to remind us that theory and reading strategies are themselves deeply imbricated in specific histories and politics.

Our model of intercultural theatre rests on a notion of differentiated hybridity that works in multiple and sometimes opposing ways.<sup>19</sup> Postcolonial theory has long recognized that particular modes of hybridity are pinned to social, political, and economic factors, which are conditioned, in turn, by historical experiences of cultural encounters. Extensive debate about the political purchase of hybridity has prompted scholars such as Robert Young (1995) to distinguish between two kinds of hybridity: organic and intentional. *Organic hybridity*, which has been aligned with creolization and metissage, is close to the fusion model often manifest in intercultural theory. It results in new cultural practices and identities without conscious contestation, and serves a stabilizing function in settling cultural differences. In this kind of hybridity, agency inheres in cosmopolitanism, the ability to cross between cultures and to master their hybrid forms. In contrast, *intentional hybridity* focuses on the process of negotiation between different practices and points of view. It is characterized by division and separation and tends to be self-reflexive, with the negotiation process inevitably pinpointing areas of conflict. In

this instance, agency hinges on the degree to which cultural forms resist dilution and/or co-option. According to Young, the two categories of hybridity, the intentional and the organic, can be in operation at the same time, resulting in an antithetical movement of coalescence and antagonism. This offers a

dialectical model for cultural interaction: an organic hybridity, which will tend towards fusion, in conflict with intentional hybridity, which enables a contestatory activity, a politicized setting of cultural differences against each other dialogically. (1995:22)

Debates about hybridity in postcolonial theory tend to go hand in hand with discussions of authenticity. Griffiths reminds us that “authenticity” is a politically charged concept rather than a “natural” or preexisting attribute. While it may be politically exigent for non-Western peoples to deploy discourses of authenticity in order to bolster their cultural authority, in the hands of Western critics and commentators, the sign of the “authentic” can easily become a fetishized commodity that grounds the legitimacy of other cultures “not in their practice but in our desire” (Griffiths 1994:82). That much intercultural theatre has been driven by an intense interest in harnessing “traditional” performance forms suggests we should treat authenticity with caution, recognizing that it registers, and responds to, hierarchies of power. In this context, the ability to manipulate markers of authenticity becomes another measure of agency.

### *Sites of Intervention*

If postcolonialism is to denaturalize the universalist vision of the more egregious kinds of interculturalism, it must bring into focus such aspects of theatre as language, space, the body, costume, and spectatorship as ideologically laden sign systems as well as potential sites of hybridity. By briefly outlining politicized ways of reading such sign systems,<sup>20</sup> we hope in the final section of this essay to suggest pathways into intercultural projects that resist an unproblematized transfer of culture.

On the whole, intercultural theatre has tended to favor visual spectacle over linguistic innovation; nevertheless, there are significant language-based issues that pertain to both its processes and products. An elementary but immensely important question is the matter of whose language is used for everyday communication during the devising and rehearsing of specific productions. The fact that English has become the lingua franca in an increasingly globalized arts community gives its native speakers considerable power to substantiate their views and/or secure their particular agendas. In this respect, we should remember that the wide-scale imposition of imperial languages on non-Western peoples has constituted an insidious form of epistemic violence, since the system of values inherent in a language becomes the “system upon which social, economic and political discourses are grounded” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1995:283). To ask whose values are heard and whose are silenced by the use of specific languages therefore seems essential to a more politicized form of interculturalism. In addition, we might ask how linguistic translations are conducted and whose interests they serve: Does the translator function as a negotiator or a type of “native informant”? What happens to linguistic concepts that resist translation or adaptation? In terms of theatrical product, language issues are equally complicated: How do staged languages animate one another? Which carries the cultural authority? What happens to the performative features of verbal enunciation, particularly when stories from predominantly oral cultures are presented? How might we reread verbally silenced bodies in different ways?

Since intercultural theatre stages a meeting of cultures in both physical and imaginative realms—the actual place(s) where a project takes place as well as the fictional spaces represented by the *mise-en-scène*—its spatial semantics also demand analysis. Space is neither neutral nor homogenous; it inevitably colors those relationships within its limits, especially on the stage where configurations of space take on symbolic meaning. We need to ask, then, how the physical space/meeting place inflects intercultural collaboration: Whose ground are we on? What are the power relations inscribed in the architectural aspects of that place? How can theatre provide a space for negotiating or subverting the relationships its spatial configurations foster? We also need to examine the ideological assumptions that inhere in the imaginative space(s) created by the scenography: What does the set, for instance, convey about the cultures involved in the collaboration? Which actors and characters have access to/priority over what spaces? Where are the borders between cultures and how are they maintained, traversed, or broken down? What kind of cultural landscape is suggested by the stagescape?

Postcolonial theorizing of geography, cartography, and spatial history shows how space is constructed in the nexus of power and culture rather than simply existing as an ontological category. This kind of politicized approach brings into focus the disjunctive gap between visible space and its fictional referent (what we infer or imagine from our culturally inflected reading of proxemics). It is then possible to explore the rhizomatic potential of interculturalism—its ability to make multiple connections and disconnections between cultural spaces—and to create representations that are unbounded and open, and potentially resistant to imperialist forms of closure.

The body in intercultural theatre is equally subject to multiple inscriptions, producing an unstable signifier rather than a totalized identity. It is a site of convergence for contesting discourses even though it may be marked with the distinctive signs of a particular culture. Postcolonial theory aims to foreground the ways in which power is inscribed on, and negotiated through, the body. Such theory continually questions what is spoken through the body, how its languages operate, and in the service of whose vested interests. It maintains that the body is not only a site of knowledge/power but also a site of resistance which, in Elizabeth Grosz's words, "exerts a recalcitrance and always entails the possibility of counterstrategic re-inscription [because] it is capable of being self-marked, self-represented in alternative ways" (1990:64). We need, then, to look at how resistance is expressed in relation to performative bodies, how those bodies encode difference and specificity, and how they can prevent the universalizing impulse of transculturalism.

As categories that are constructed through visible differences, race and gender have particular significance in this respect; it is important to note, however, that these are complex and even unstable categories, being historically conditioned rather than determined solely by biology. One of the problems intercultural theatre often faces is how to avoid essentialist constructions of race and gender while still accounting for the irreducible specificity of certain bodies and body behaviors. A common response is to elevate particular roles in source texts to the level of archetypes that can then be played by any skilled performer. Peter Brook's *Mahabharata* has been accused of this approach (Dasgupta 1991; Bharucha 1993:68–87). This process of distillation strips the readable signs of culture from the source text rather than provoke the audience to examine the tensions between participating cultures. There is no dialogic interaction; instead a specific body is submerging in the archetypal role according to the aesthetic principles of the project. Postcolonial theory warns against the dehistoricizing effects of such distillation processes. It focuses on analyzing the gap between the material body and what it is supposed to represent. This involves examining movement as well as bodily ap-

pearance, since, as Pavis notes, “actors simultaneously reveal the culture of the community where they have trained and where they live, and the bodily technique they have acquired” (1996:3). Rather than working from principles of abstraction, an intercultural practice informed by postcolonialism would play up cultural differences without attempting to deny the effects of the political economy that underpins the project. The hybrid counter-energies that result from the clash between the symbolic space and the culturally inscribed body can then produce “a radical heterogeneity, discontinuity, [and] the perpetual revolution of form” (Young 1995:25).

A politicized reading of costume is similarly necessary to the formulation of a more comprehensive theory about intercultural performance. It seems that part of the attraction of interculturalism has to do with the fantasy of stepping into “native” costume in a process of cultural transvestism that does anything but subvert power hierarchies. As Gail Ching-Liang Low argues, the fantasy of cross-cultural dressing identifies clothes as a “‘badge and advertisement’ of [the dominant culture’s] ability to cross the class and cultural gap”; hence cultural transvestism offers “the promise of ‘transgressive’ pleasure without the penalties of actual change” (1989:92–93). If such transvestism could be used to draw attention to the difficulties that inhere in crossing cultural gaps, costume would then become another possible site of resistant inscription rather than a conduit for the one-way cultural transfer that currently characterizes certain forms of interculturalism. This is where postcolonial theories about mimicry, masquerade, and self-conscious constructions of subjectivity can come into play because they treat costume as a malleable and even ambiguous signifier rather than a transparent sign of particular gender, racial, social, and national identities.

Degrees of power and privilege are also embedded in the framing mechanisms through which particular elements of a performance are presented to its audience(s). Typically, intercultural theatre positions the performance traditions and/or actual bodies of “other” cultures as focal points of the Western viewer’s specular consumption, and it is through this kind of untroubled and desiring gaze that reified images of cultural difference are validated and circulated on the “international” arts market. If intercultural theatre means to address the potential inequities involved in Western appropriations of other cultural traditions, then its adherents must conceive of a theatre that somehow engages with its own established “looking” relations. Interventionary frameworks and other metatheatrical devices—these might range from direct audience address to self-conscious role playing to forum discussion—can be used to problematize the implicitly imperialist object-relations model of cross-cultural spectatorship. Within the self-reflexive theatre that we envision, the hybridizing of cultural fragments would be far from seamless: cultural tensions would not be hidden nor difference naturalized.

### *Conclusion*

We have attempted to map the field of cross-cultural theatre as a way of thinking through its complexities and contradictions. Despite our efforts to integrate a diverse range of theories and practices into a “big-picture” account of the field, we are not advocating a totalizing theory of cultural exchange. Rather, our discussion is designed to enable a strategic way of rethinking the local and context-specific through the global, and vice versa. This sort of matrixed model, we would argue, proffers a more nuanced method of actualizing and analyzing the range of work that is increasingly becoming a globalized praxis.

Our all too brief survey of potential sites of intervention in the practice and interpretation of intercultural theatre outlines some of the ways in which the

mise-en-scène can be politicized and the notion of cultural hegemony relativized. In an age where cultural boundaries are continually traversed and identities are becoming increasingly hybridized, an intercultural theatre practice informed by postcolonial theory can potentially function as a site where this intersecting of cultures is both reflected and critiqued. Such a practice would align with (though not necessarily replicate) Gómez-Peña's formulation of "border art," in which the performer's job is "to trespass, bridge, interconnect, reinterpret, remap, and redefine" the limits of culture (1996:12). It is vital that intercultural theatre's potential to cross cultures is not co-opted and neutralized by the "weaker" forms of postmodernism, which tend to result in an abstract, depoliticized, and ahistorical notion of "difference," or, in effect, a masked "indifference." In this respect, Homi Bhabha's clarification of postcolonial hybridity as based on an agonistic relationship rather than a seamless fusion offers a workable model for an ethics as well as an aesthetics of cross-cultural engagement:

Hybrid hyphenations emphasise the incommensurable elements [...] as the basis of cultural identifications. What is at issue is the performative nature of differential identities: the regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually, contingently, "opening out," remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference—be it class, gender or race. Such assignments of social differences—where difference is neither One nor the Other but something else besides, in-between—find their agency in [...] an interstitial future, that emerges in between the claims of the past and the needs of the present. (1994:219)

The kind of hyphenated hybridity that Bhabha outlines is already within the conceptual reach of interculturalism. It is now time for a more sustained and systematic engagement with the politics of its production.

### Notes

1. "Agency" refers here to the potential to act or perform an action autonomously; it registers degrees of power and knowledge combined, since to act autonomously is to understand the ideological systems in which one is imbricated.
2. For an extended discussion of multiculturalism in Canada, Australia, and the United States, see Gunew (1993:51–65).
3. See Bennett (1996:144–47) for examples of small "m" multicultural theatre in which blind-cast productions of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* unwittingly reproduced dominant cultural values.
4. Guillermo Gómez-Peña critiques a similar model of intercultural encounter in his concept of "corporate" or "transnational" multiculturalism, which, he argues, characterizes many business and media conglomerates' current interest in difference. Such difference performs the "passive roles of glossy images and exotic background" and real diversity is "flattened and equalized by high production values" (2001:12).
5. Examples of big "M" multicultural theatre include various projects done by El Teatro Campesino (U.S.), Talawa (Britain), Doppio Teatro and Urban Theatre Projects (Australia), and Cahoots Theatre Projects (Canada). Of course, there have been numerous projects (especially in non-Western countries) that fit within our definition of multicultural theatre, although the specific practitioners involved may not identify their work in this way. Examples include projects by Five Arts Centre (Malaysia), William Kentridge and the Handspring Puppet Company (South Africa), Rustom Bharucha (India), and Gómez-Peña (U.S.A./Mexico).
6. Our identification of ghetto and migrant theatres is influenced by Richard Fotheringham's work ([1987] 1992:197–98).
7. For further explication of community theatre, see Baz Kershaw (1992).

8. For some time, postcolonial theatre has been well theorized as a conceptual category, albeit a contested one; however, in-depth engagement with postcolonialism has been conspicuously absent from discussions of cross-cultural performance work in journals such as *TDR*. Similarly, Patrice Pavis's introduction to *The Intercultural Performance Reader* (1996) virtually dismisses the field of postcolonial theatre, even though some of the book's contents clearly fit within this grouping.
9. Wole Soyinka, Derek Walcott, and Girish Karnad are the most prominent of a very large and diverse group of dramatists who might be categorized as "postcolonial." Well-known indigenous theatre groups in countries permanently colonized by European powers include *Kooemba Jdarra* (Australia), *Taki Rua Productions* (New Zealand), *Spiderwoman* (U.S.A.), and *Native Earth Performing Arts* (Canada). See Gilbert and Tompkins (1996) for an extended account of the field.
10. See the introduction to Christopher Balme's book, *Decolonizing the Stage: Theatrical Syncretism and Post-Colonial Drama* (1999) for an extended history of the conceptual category of syncretic theatre. Balme has been the key theorist of this form of cross-cultural performance for several years, though he initially assessed its overarching function as cultural rapprochement rather than decolonization and/or resistance.
11. His notable theatre projects include *Tooth of Crime* (1973), *Mother Courage* (1975), *The Prometheus Project* (1983–85), and *Three Sisters* (1995–97).
12. The *Tales from South Asia* project, as documented by Sharon Grady and Phillip Zarilli (1994), exhibits most of the features of the collaborative model. The stated aims of the project's initiators were to:
 

develop a strategy of presentation and representation which engages an audience and/or students in "difference" without stereotyping, essentializing, romanticizing the "other, and keeping one's audience aware of contestation as a social reality" (Grady and Zarilli 1994:169)
13. Similar celebratory responses can be found in Williams (1992) and Wilshire and Wilshire (1989).
14. This position has been described elsewhere as "happy hybridity" (see Lo 2000).
15. Schechner's 1989 article, "Intercultural Themes," maps his thinking on the subject up to the end of the 1980s; see his 1996 interview with Pavis for a more recent account.
16. On a similar note, Craig Latrell recently argued for a more complex reading of intercultural exchange beyond the "victim-victimizer narrative." The non-Western cultures should not be perceived as passive receivers of Western ideas but rather active manipulators of such influences (2000:45–46). His analysis of the specificity of theatrical agency is, however, weakened by the lack of attention to historical specificity, and particularly the impact of colonialism in Singapore and Indonesia.
17. For detailed explanation, see Pavis (1992:4–20).
18. Pavis adheres to the idea of turning the hourglass over for other perspectives, but, unlike his earlier theorization, which advocated the reversal as a way for the source culture to monitor its own process of exchange, the latest discussion appears to consolidate the primacy of the dominant culture:
 

At the end of the process, when spectators feel themselves buried alive under the sand of signs and symbols, they have no other salvation than to give up and turn the hourglass upside down. Then the perspective inverts, and one must reverse and relativize the sediments accumulated in the receiving culture and judge them from the point of view of alterity and relativity. (1996:18)
19. For a fuller account of various modes of hybridity, see Lo (2000:152–55).
20. See Gilbert (1998:13–25) for a more detailed discussion of the ways in which postcolonial theory can be used to interpret ideological aspects of performance.

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