Multicultural Reservations, Hybrid Avenues: Reflecting on Culture in Art Education

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of hybridity in culture as it relates to art education. Curriculum strategies in art education are based essentially on pluralist premises. Such strategies recognize diversity, honor differences, and try to redress the inequitable Eurocentric models of the past. Nevertheless, even in their most critical forms they reproduce a scheme of culture that subtly confirms the established order of Modern hierarchies, and fail to capture the fluid, hybrid, and uneven character of culture. Margaret Archer's theories of culture, society, and change are among the most insightful to date. Taking them on board will ensure that our curricula be grounded in more realistic concepts of culture and agency, from which art educators can build truly equitable curricula that recognize the implication of identities in each other.

The first part of this paper looks at the kind of ideas about culture that form the basis of discourse in art education about multiculturalism. I assert that in art education cultural theory is encumbered by its reliance on concepts that capture the plural aggregate nature of culture, and by a failure to incorporate effectively the hybrid character of culture into

their theories. As a result art education copes inadequately with culture's paradoxical nature. Cultures can be distinguished, but on closer inspection, what looks like an organic compound reveals itself to be a mixture of differences. The second part proposes that Margaret Archer's theory of culture and her method of accounting for cultural change, are better and sounder premises for reflecting on culture, and creating curricula that cope equitably with issues of diversity, and with rapid or slow cultural change. In the third section of the paper I, so to speak, put flesh on the bones of Archer's theory by exploring historical examples that elucidate her ideas. The examples also illustrate how inequitable hierarchies of discrimination, albeit in subtle—but for that reason more intransigent—forms are perpetuated.

Culture egos, good fences, and good neighbors

How have we in art education approached, or not approached, the issue of hybridity and syncretism thus far? While the recognition of the importance of diversity has come a long way in the United States, the same cannot be said for understanding the role of hybridity or the syncretic nature of culture. The post Civil Rights period saw the expansion of receptivity to multiculturalism, to the extent that it has become the norm to recognize the racial and ethnic diversity of the United States. The desire to redress past imbalances in the representation and inclusion of minorities meant that they had to be recognized and their distinct histories honored. Today most university foundation art programs require students to complete art history foundation courses that attempt to accommodate the new norm. The degree of success they achieve in trying to honor diversity in their curriculum is contingent on many factors ranging from breadth of content to competence and willingness of professors to implement the change. The "balance," it is safe to say, is generally conceived in terms of an emphasis on "Western" art, maybe in two parts, pre-historic to Medieval and Renaissance to modern and Post Modern; and a required

non-Western course that functions as a window on diversity. Texts for training art teachers such as *Art Works for Elementary Teachers* (Herberholtz & Herberholtz, 2002) now in its ninth edition, and *Children and Their Art* (Hurwitz & Day, 2001) in its seventh edition, follow a similar distribution of space for Western and non-Western cultures. Not withstanding the sympathy for multiculturalism manifested by these institutional changes, what they mean in reality is that "multiculturalism" has become a distinct category alongside Euro-American history, which is seen as the main history of consequence.

Other texts, such as *Art: Images and Ideas* (Chapman, 1992) or *The Visual Arts: A History* (Honor & Fleming, 1992), deviate from the above formula, which herds other cultures into a 'multicultural reservation.' These authors attempt a more balanced representation of cultures. Nevertheless, both approaches confirm and leave undisturbed modernist assumptions about culture formation and cultural entities. Art teachers and their students are somehow presumed to be better off with a picture of stable, clearly identifiable, inviolate cultures. Justice and fairness are also, we are to assume, finally served by these approaches. The prior imbalance, namely the exclusive emphasis on European culture, is redressed. Difference is honored, plurality affirmed, the ego of all ethnic, racial, and gender constituencies were supposed to, and in many cases did, feel good about the improved status of recognition.

Identity, culture, mixing

At the bottom of this acceptance and satisfaction with the 'multicultural reservation' by the majority is an understanding that self-esteem is important to everyone: which means an acceptance of some stability in the sense of self that is affected negatively and positively by situations. The cultural egos that were appropriately diminished or elevated by these formulas, on the one hand found some

respite from guilt (Euro-Americans) and on the other hand some measure of satisfaction in long unjustly withheld recognition. However, what is not so visible in the glare of recognized and affirmed differences and plurality, of nicely demarcated, easily distinguished, and neatly labeled different identities, is the mixed and fluid constitution of cultures, systems, subjects, and objects.

One cannot be indifferent to the profound role difference plays in grounding identity, nor of the need for redressing past injustice. Yet we should not conceive of cultural selves in false and inappropriate terms that in the end make curricula, programs, and teachers stop short of equitable and democratic forms, and above all, of helping students and their communities have a deeper understanding of them selves and how their identities are created or constructed. We cannot account adequately especially for modern identities, which are rapidly shifting networks of borrowings, by using terminologies, attitudes, and strategies still impelled by modernist/colonial assumptions. Indeed, interaction between cultures, though no doubt radically affected by developments that make for easier communication in recent times, has always been a factor in cultural development and change (Subramanyan. 1992, Bernal, 2001). Cultural theory and teaching practice and training, however, have been very slow to move beyond theories and terminologies that capture little more than the plural appearance of our world. Indeed, even though theorists readily agree that celebratory forms of multiculturalism are encumbered by essentialist and presumed objective notions of culture (Chalmers, 2002), it is very difficult even for the critical forms to place cultural hybridity and fluidity at the center of their curriculum design and practice. Not only do we in the rarified echelons of theoretical debate continue to use the inadequate terms that modernity devised, but also in practice it is difficult to overcome attributing characteristics exclusively to the "West" or the "East" or to "Africans." Witness the following extracts

from the review of *Celebrating pluralism: Art, Education, and Cultural Diversity* (Stuhr, 1999).

I [Patricia Stuhr] agreed with his [Don Krug] position and added:

There is no such thing as a homogeneous culture anyway that you can get to know completely. There is no such thing as " an" African American culture or "a" Native American culture that you can completely get to know; there is no complete portrait of a culture that you can get to know by memorizing characteristics of it. All there is that you can get to know is individual people's experience based on their living within particular cultural groups that exists within a particular nation(s): a piece of that culture. And a person's cultural identity is made up of many aspects. . . And many of these aspects of a person's cultural identity are always in flux and dynamic; they always move on. (p. 183)

Here we have the affirmation of cultural fluidity and the dismissal of the notion that a culture can be reduced to a set of specific distinguishing characteristics that can be regarded as its "essence." Stuhr's dissolution of cultural difference comes across as rather absolute. However, this may be due more to the immediacy of the oral form of the original discussion than to any intention on her part to totally dissolve cultural distinctions. The important point we need to keep in mind is that recognition of cultural fluidity runs counter to ingrained notions that culture is reducible to a set of characteristics that so to speak generate it.

Again the question of cultural imperialism was raised, and Don [Krug] remarked:

I see them [the authors on p. 4 discussing cultural imperialism] advocating awareness and sensitivity, and not necessarily doing

anything. I think we should make a distinction. I think that cultural imperialism advocates one point of view. Pluralism looks at several perspectives.

Mike [Michael Parsons] built on Don's comment. "But seeing things from multiple perspectives is a Western point of view. Just the idea that we should have multiple points of view on a thing like circumcision is a Western idea."

Arthur [Efland] added, "cultural pluralism is a Western idea. In Japan they will tell you that multiculturalism is not a Japanese idea because they see themselves as a monoculture. People from Korean descent cannot obtain citizenship in Japan." (Stuhr, 1999, p. 186)

Here we see how easy it is to relapse into essentialist postures. It is as if Mike and Arthur did not agree with Stuhr's earlier declaration on cultural fluidity. In the heat of discussion intuitive convictions surface to reveal how stubborn they are to remove. In this case the assumption was that pluralism is a Western idea. A little reflection would be enough to show that something was wrong with that assertion. When did the West conceive of the notion of pluralism? Is this "Western" culture inclusive of Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, or is it a term that refers simply to Euro-American and European culture? It seems more like the latter, and if so, was that culture, which tried to rid natives of their 'backward' cultures, to assimilate and transform them into yellow, brown and black *sahibs* (Europeans), forever possessed of pluralism? No. Therefore, when and from where did the West acquire the notion of pluralism, for it certainly was not always a feature of the "West?" Perhaps, and this is questionable, pluralism is a consequence of imperialism. But since when was imperialism an exclusively modern, exclusively Western idea?

How are we to understand what occurred in the discussion that Stuhr made available to us? Those who took a social reconstructionist position are as legitimately suspicious and fearful of overemphasizing similarity as celebrants of plurality are of exaggerating difference. The former are leery of exposing similarity because it "parallels with ideas of assimilation" (Stuhr, 1999, p. 182-183). However, the reconstructionists underestimate the power of egotism in identity. Those cresting a wave of cultural superiority have great difficulty acknowledging they share something with others. Whatever is borrowed from others is always translated into something substantially different and ineffably better. Witness the above delusion that "pluralism" is a modern "Western/European" invention. It is one of several delusions that continue to bedevil art education, resulting from a refusal to acknowledge the incorporation of others into the constitutions of our selves and what we consider "our culture." Therefore, the fear that exposure of similarities can be an instrument of assimilationist motives can be as much fog to clarity of theory and moisture to a modern imperialist program as it is a brake on "uncritical" celebrations of pluralism.

Margaret Archer and Morphogenesis

Clearly, even though one may assert that cultures are fluid and (the closer we look at them) fragmented, not only do we distinguish cultures from each other, the habit of attributing inalienable properties to them is hard to overcome. In confronting the dilemma occasioned by similarity and difference, congruence and incongruence, harmony and dissonance, among and between cultures, the rejected notion of essences (that cultures are reducible to a set of generative characteristics), or something very similar in effect, steals back in to embarrass our critical postures. What we are faced with is the insidious effects of essentialist thinking, or what Margaret Archer more wisely

called the *"Myth of cultural integration"* (italics mine), appropriated by sociology from early anthropology, which perpetuates the image of culture as a coherent pattern, a uniform ethos or a symbolically consistent universe" (Archer, 1988, p. xv). The effect of cultural integrity is also produced by perspectives that are not essentialist (Archer, 1988).

> Two features of this heritage should be underlined. On the one hand its strong aesthetic rather than analytical orientation, which led to an endorsement of ' "artistic" hermeneutics as the method for grasping the inner sense of cultural wholes'. On the other hand this approach, based on the intuitive understanding of cultural configurations, entailed a crucial prejudgment, namely an insistence that the coherence was there to be found, that is a mental closure against the discovery of cultural inconsistencies. (Archer, 1988, p. 3)

This "Myth" worked itself into art education through the ideas of McFee (1961) and others who drew on anthropology. While they were many positive changes in art education brought about by these scholars, those changes were nevertheless accompanied by representations of cultures as neat compact packages, and a persistent, even stubborn, tendency to emphasize pluralism at the expense of cultural hybridity and contradiction. The Myth, Archer (1988) states,

> . . . received monumental reinforcement by its adoption into Western Marxism. The notion of 'hegemonic culture' and its offspring, the 'dominant-ideology' thesis, embodied the same assumptions about cultural coherence: . . . Significantly the now-familiar reliance on aesthetic grasp dominated Marxist methodology here, as evidenced by the growing preoccupation of Euro-Marxists with literary criticism with laying bare the

ideological impregnation of works of art, by a kind of 'class-decoding' which had distinct affinities with the enterprise of linguistic structuralism. (p. 3-4)[1].

The critical multiculturalists and social reconstructionists resonate with the social transformative approach of the Marxist, but along with overestimating the transformative power of critical rationality-itself a legacy of the "enlightened" modernity-they undervalue the role of hybridity and syncretism *in especially "Western" culture.*

The fact that hybridity, or mixture, and eclecticism are more the norm than the exception in culture troubled sociologists for some time, but ran counter to the earlier established conviction of cultural integrity. In tracking its disturbing presence in social theory, Archer noted that Sorokin, was "driven to recognize that the majority of 'Culture Systems' were in fact incoherent mixes" (Archer, 1988, p. 29). Nevertheless, his subscription to the theory of cultural coherence remained and led social theorists to under-value "the positive contribution of contradiction" (Archer, 1988, p. 30) to cultural change. Thus one of the pivotal engines of cultural coherence remained unrecognized and unchallenged. The other was the failure to analytically separate cultural systems (CS) from the socio-cultural (S-C) activity of cultural agents. To elaborate following Archer, if one asserts that postmodern scholars and traditions of Indian philosophies—Hindu and Buddhist—agree that identity is constructed, such an assertion can be checked to see if it logically holds up. That is to say cultural ideas are logically related. However, to say that Indian philosophy influenced postmodern scholars is to look into the activities of people, of cultural agents, which are causally related. "both are vital elements in an adequate theory of cultural stability or change" (Archer 1988, p. 105). The prevailing tendency is to conflate or fuse the two into a whole, rather than recognize the different spheres within which

they operate. Archer identified three kinds of conflation working in social theory— upward, downward, and central.

> The first pair make either the 'part' or the 'people' an epiphenomenon of the other: . . . In the one, cultural properties are simply formed and transformed by some untrammeled dominant group or placed at the mercy of capricious renegotiation of unconstrained agency. In the other, some cultural code or central value system imposes its choreography on cultural life and agents are reduced to träger or bearers of its properties, whether through oversocialization or mystification. (Archer, 1988, p. *xiii*)

The third version, central conflation, has affinities to essentialism or the integration myth, produces similar effects, but not by recourse to essences, nor by making people absolute puppets of cultural systems, nor yet by making systems simply the tools of dominant groups. Rather, "the properties of cultural systems and the properties of cultural interaction are conflated because they are presented as being so tightly constitutive of one another" (Archer, 1988, p. xiii) that it is impossible to see where one begins and the other ends. Autonomy is effectively denied to the constituents of culture, both 'parts' and 'people.' Conflationist theories therefore fail to account adequately for the forces occasioning cultural change and stability. Their pervasiveness in modern and postmodern social theory may account for the failure of even radical art educators to fashion curricula that move beyond pluralism.

When it comes to cultural translation the presumption of cultural coherence leaves us with basically two options for comprehending others, both insurmountable. We either "'become as a child' or 'go native'" (Archer, 1988, p. 124). In short, there is no hope of cultures ever understanding each other; we have to accept that difference is an

insurmountable wall between groups. Indeed, as stated earlier, when cultures are conceived in terms of a closed circuit of cultural system and cultural agent, violence to personal and group integrities will be inevitable no matter what the circumstances of exchange between identities. Because ideas are held to be culture specific there is great resistance to seeing correspondences across cultures, and there can be no transmission or translation across cultures. Laboring under the influence of conflationist concepts of culture, critical multiculturalists and social reconstructionists struggle with the relativistic attitude of "celebratory" pluralism. For the advocates of the critical approach celebrating differences can amount to ignoring pernicious aspects of culture. Adopting the celebratory posture the educator does nothing to change cultures for the better. From the perspective of the critical multiculturalists and social reconstructionists, the "celebratory" approach lends itself too readily to cultural dilution and misrepresentation. However, we should not assume that critical and celebratory multiculturalists do not share the theoretical ideas of culture. In fact, they did. The critical multiculturalists objected to ignoring real injustice. They were suspicious of cross-cultural correspondences, which they regard as too ready an instrument of assimilation. Therefore, they prefer to emphasize the contemporary and seek justice and social improvement for living peoples, rather than focus on romanticized, uncertain, questionable cultural traditions (Stuhr, 1999). However, when delivered by teachers ensconced comfortably in the dominant culture, whose history is routinely recycled and has not been mangled or marginalized, such approaches treat others unequally. At the end of the day, critical multiculturalists and social reconstructivists treat culture as an integrated coherent whole, in which the part needs the context of the whole to be truly understood. With such a formula of culture in place the critical and reconstructivist camp has little choice but to invoke

some moral superiority to justify their critique. How then to get pass the problem of contextual dependence?

In Archer's opinion the problem of contextual dependence is a methodological one.

> "It stemmed from attempting to deal with the Cultural System and Socio-Cultural life simultaneously *because* they *are* intertwined. Instead I suggest that the death-trap can be skirted by proceeding more slowly. Specifically this involves examining the Cultural System first, in isolation from social life, before addressing the Socio-cultural level and then the relations between them" (Archer, 1988, pp 133-4).

Analytical dualism solves the problem created by trying to do too much at one time. Let me turn again to Archer to clarify her method.

> Consequently, analytical dualism is, first, based on the premises that the CS [cultural system] originates from the S-C [socio-cultural] level (culture is man-made), but, second, that over time a stream of intelligibilia, escape their progenitors and acquire autonomy as denizens of World Three, after which time we can examine how they act back on subsequent generations of people. Third, that since people go on making culture we can investigate how new items enter the CS and old ones are displaced, providing time is specified. Of course both CS and S-C effects are at work simultaneously throughout history, but it is impossible to unpack their morphogenetic or morphostatic contributions without making use of analytical dualism to disengage temporal cycles of Cultural Conditioning Æ Cultural interaction Æ Cultural Elaboration. (Archer, 1988, p 144)

Archer's ideas about culture correspond to those arrived at by Peter Bürger about art objects in his *Theory of the Avant Garde* (1984), but there is an ironic aspect to this correspondence, for while she saw 'artistic hermeneutics' as linked to the generation of "coherent" concepts, he saw 'artistic hermeneutics' as a traditional European aesthetic attitude that had to be superceded by another embedded and embodied in montage (and I would add collage and assemblage). "It [the art work] is no longer the harmony of the individual parts that constitute the whole[2]; it is the contradictory relationship of heterogeneous elements" (Bürger, 1984, p. 82). Bürger saw the organic notions as coincident with classical European aesthetics and art (Renaissance to Post-impressionists and possibly analytical Cubists), culminating and persisting in Romantic ideas. He saw the non-organic, or more mechanical, notion of art as coincident with the constructive montage type works of the early twentieth century. Bürger perceptively realized that the classical hermeneutics premised on integrated art objects had to be replaced and states, "a critical hermeneutics will replace the theorem of necessary agreement of parts and whole by investigating the contradiction between various layers and only then infer the meaning of the whole" (Bürger, 1984 p. 82). Working out a theory of culture and a method of cultural analysis Archer arrive a similar realization. Where Archer advances over Bürger is in the realization that the traditional concepts of society, and of art objects, were in fact flawed; the notions of coherence and unity were short sighted from the start. Classical aesthetics, which Bürger sees related to, and which conceived of, the "organic" art object, effectively overlooked the fact that such objects were a construction or "assemblage" that worked with contradictions such as pigment, strokes, and the like. The fact is, at one moment an object may be regarded as organic and at another it may be regarded as mechanical.

Culture and Collage

In trying to make sense of the conundrum of cultural identity, which at one moment appears as an organic coherent entity, and at another (with more penetrating inspection) disappears into fragments of different individuals, I have suggested that Archer and Bürger offer us theoretical perspectives for making sense of the confusion. A conundrum made even more complex by cultural interaction and change. In what follows I want to present some examples that show not only the intertwined nature of the activity of cultural agent and cultural ideas, but also the need to analytically distinguish them from each other, as recommended by Archer. Invariably, inflated identity, coupled with the assumption of cultural coherence, functions as a distraction to recognizing correspondences and a tendency to misrepresent interaction.

I will start with the irony that Bürger's recognition of a coincidence of montage with the 'nonorganic' aspect of art objects hardly ever prompts scholars to ask such questions as "if collage and montage suggested such ideas to Bürger, could similar ideas be found in African cultures?" Such questions never, or very rarely arise, blocked by the thickness of the presumption of culturally coherent identity, and by the persistent presumption that the ideas are culturally unique, in this case uniquely European. This happens in relation to other non-Western cultures as well, but with African culture the stakes are higher. The incredible prospect of 'primitive tribal" people having thoughts as sophisticated as modern advanced Europeans, even-more inconceivably-postmodern ones, strikes at the heart of modern social hierarchies of dominance. This is not China or India; this is Africa, the synonym of backwardness, and the antonym of Europeanness. When critical theorists, of whatever ilk, presume that a critical emphasis on difference will rescue African Americans, Africans, and any other ethnic or racial group from assimilation, that presumption is often oblivious

of European affective investments in their "difference," and to that extent they are subtly complicit with modern imperial structures of dominance.

Since it is perhaps easier to imagine that kind of ideological correspondence and traffic taking place between Asian and European cultures, it is fortunate that Martin Powers supplies us with an appropriate example. The issue in question is historical accounts of formalist aesthetics. Having shown that Roger Fry, one of its leading theorists, drew heavily on Chinese aesthetics (Powers, 1995), Powers makes the following statement.

> The nineteenth- and twentieth-century rejection of mimetic standards in deference to expressive ideals is regarded as one of those great achievements unique to Western culture. How do we deal with the fact-emotionally and historically-that one of the chief ideologues of this movement threw his weight behind key terms and issues embedded in Chinese criticism? *The situation is distinct from, say, Picasso's use of non-European art, for Fry was not reading modern sentiments into works of another culture* (italics mine). Quite the contrary, he was entertaining constructs found in Chinese sources from early times, such constructs being made accessible via the works of Binyon and Herbert Giles, albeit through the filter of late Romantic interpretation. (p. 5)

The question for mainstream art education is whether it is ready to confront such questions as Powers is willing to ask? So far multiculturalism has been blissfully oblivious of them or have skirted them. Formalist aesthetics is treated as exclusively a modern invention, imposed on others. I will elaborate on the italicized portion of the quotation later; Powers (1995) has more to say that we should hear.

To try to make sense of this situation in terms of "influence" would

lock us into the rhetoric of nationalism-let us put that option aside. A more fashionable approach might be to dismiss Fry's interest in Chinese art theory as part of a colonialist discourse designed to disguise European exploitation of Asia, hiding appropriation beneath a camouflage of "appreciation." But this interpretation would not so much expose colonialism as promote it, for it effectively reduces the Chinese discourse-which had its own social agenda-to the status of a mere ornament of Fry's imperialist ambitions. More important, such an approach robs the historian of the possibility of understanding "illusion-versus-expression" discourses as anything other than the peculiar symptom of the essence of European culture in the modern epoch. If we are truly to entertain the possibility of general theories about culture, as our ancestors in the eighteenth century set out to do-yet wish to avoid nationalistic rhetoric-in the end it might be better to face the possibility that the illusion-versus-expression trope is not unique to the "West."

This need not cause anxiety. Indeed, one could see in it an opportunity to make positive use of the counterchange condition[3], *for in such a case it is evident that any description of the "modern" theory of art limited to European experience is incomplete.* (Italics mine) (pp. 5-6)

Can art education rise to the task implied in that last sentence? Can we confront the hybridity that it implies? The mulatto mestizo culture that passes as exclusively European can only be partially understood when its "other" aspects are left out. What the example above illustrates, however, is the causal relationship that obtains when we are dealing with how cultural agents use ideas, in this case from the Far East, to fill the need for a new aesthetic, in this case Europe's. However, Powers' caution against reducing Chinese discourse to the

status of being a mere ornament of Fry's imperial ambitions, needs to be expanded if formalist aesthetic ideas are not simply to be an ornament of Chinese culture. Indeed, it is only when we acknowledge that cultural ideas, like artifacts, become autonomous once generated, that they cannot be reduced to a decorative status in relation to any culture. Analytical dualism, therefore, is pivotal to getting around cultural chauvinism.

Let me turn to the italicized portion of the earlier quote where Powers fails to be sufficiently informed and critical of conventional interpretations of modern European art and typically dismisses African intelligence. *"The situation is distinct from, say, Picasso's use of non-European art, for Fry was not reading modern sentiments into works of another culture"* (italics mine) (Powers, 1995, p. 5.). Let us keep in mind that he understood that these were issues that Europeans have to deal with emotionally as well as historically and critically. In other words, this is not often seen as an issue with risks to European self-esteem. Self-esteem issues always concern minorities. What do I see when I revisit Picasso and the Cubist moment? It is ironic that Fry drew on Chinese aesthetics to justify what was a 'new' art form for Europe, modeled predominately by Africans.

The modern/primitive binary, with the latter regarded as just a source of raw cultural material for the former, was a fundamental aspect of the way modernist European scholarship represented the relationship between European culture and colonized dominated others. An important role of this scholarship was to distance and divorce Modern art from the 'primitive' and/or 'undynamic' other cultures that were the source of the principles of the modern forms. Texts on Cubism, and Picasso in particular, are good examples of how this motive operates to relegate, in this case African culture, to the mere raw material and

footnote status, keeping it a safe distance from crucial aspects of modern art.

The typical text on Picasso restricts the 'influence' of African art to a specific limited body of works by Picasso. According to Alfred Barr, this limited set of works was call by some "the Negro Period" (e.g. *Women in Yellow*, 1907, *Dancer*, 1907). He preferred the term "proto-cubist" (Barr, 1966, p. 61). Even though later authors did not use these terms the restriction of the influence of African art to that particular group of works has remained the norm, thereby African art's relationship to modern art was restricted to a limited ideological and stylistic space and to a very superficial effect. The chance that modern European art could be deeply blackened, that the modern innovation in art, especially a movement as pivotal to it as Cubism, could be deeply hybrid, had to be nullified. Scholarship on Picasso, Cubism, and modern art generally, simply rallied to the task; it simply refused to entertain any thought of other than superficial import from Africa into Cubism.

Though he may hardly have been aware of it as fear, Barr articulated his culture's insecurity very clearly, and established the method of distancing in his description of the works of "the Negro period."

The dancer, recklessly distorted, dramatic in movement and decorative in color is the masterpiece of a brief barbaric phase of the Negro period. . . . By the end of 1907 Picasso had passed through the barbaric phase of his "Negro" period. Though there are traces of both Negro and Iberian sculpture in many works of 1908, Picasso no longer depends explicitly on either. It would be better to call the paintings of this period "proto-cubist" rather than "Negro" as has been customary. (Barr, 1966, p. 61)

African influence had to be kept away from those later works in which Picasso manifests a fluent familiarity with the conceptual approach of African artists. Such works as the *Bull's Head* (1944, bicycle handle bars and seat), *Baboon and Young* (1951), and *The Three Musicians* (1921)-the Jazz flavor of which, though more an intuitive than objective perception, nevertheless-are evidence of a mature understanding of the formative principles used by the African artist. The only thing "barbaric" about Picasso's Negro period was *his* crude assumptions regarding their mode of operation and the sophisticated thinking behind them. In his "Negro" phase, Picasso was really working with the typical European notions of Africans as savage, undisciplined, irrational, and spontaneous because of undisciplined emotionality, a far cry from the disciplined conceptual approach to form that was the actual approach of African artists. Barr's distancing was twofold, restricting African influence to a narrow period and set of works, and making that period one in which Iberian and African art influenced Picasso. Hence proto-cubism removes even the word 'Negro' from the equation and makes the art of that limited number of works a set that is not-yet cubism proper. Because he was deeply embedded in European traditions, Picasso in fact had to trek, or if you prefer detour, through analytical and synthetic Cubism to arrive at the conceptual freedom to play with objects and images the way he was able to do in *The Dance* (1925), *Guernica* (1937), *Night Fishing in Antebes* (1939), and the works mentioned above, among others. What I am asserting here is that Picasso only became fluent with the formal principles of "African" or primitive art at this point, not before. This contradicts the tradition that Barr put in place, which remains substantially intact through scholarly silence and indifference. Even when it is pointed out that notions of barbarism are projections of European prejudice, as for example by Powers, there is no accompanying evidence that African cultures had developed ideas about representation that occasioned the

higher value accorded to conceptual representation, and there was nothing more unconscious about their achievement than that of any other culture's.

We can understand the racial interests that underwrote Barr's reading of Picasso's work and modern art; however, it is also difficult for critical texts to keep in sight the hybrid nature of Cubism and modern European art, even when there is a much needed corrective focus on rescuing African art objects from mere tributary status to European culture. That tributary relationship was still evident, some felt, in such shows as Primitivism in 20th-Century Art (Museum of Modern Art. 1984), that sought to account for the considerable fascination of modern European culture with "primitive" cultures. Torgovnick (1990) for example, felt

> The exhibition reenacted the dynamics of colonialism by positing the importance of primitive production solely in terms of their relationship to modern art. Such a maneuver takes objects reflecting *a wholly different modes of social, economic, and religious experience* [italics mine] and neutralizes them by making them part of Western cultural history (53-55). This is what happens when we lose interest in the objects as African-in their independent history, functions, and traditions-to focus instead on how they affected Western artists. (p.122)

This is the liberal/critical side of the equation, which in this case, sides with anthropologists and would have us look at African, and non-Western objects in general, in their own historical contexts and for themselves. However, in the italicized portion we can detect the persistence of the coherent or organic concept of culture. Invaluable as they are, such critical approaches are too restricted by their defensive positions to situate their critiques in a more dynamic concept of culture.

Cultures are kept completely distinct, even though all along modern art objects are patently the products of the colonial relationship and should be seen as hybrid. We will recall that in fact the initial reaction to modern movements, such as fauvism, dismissed them as non-European and despicable, hence the (initially) derogatory epithets, Les Fauves, Les Cubes. Both the art historical approach, which emphasized formal borrowing, and the anthropological approach, which emphasized European misreading and violation of African cultural integrities, have conspired to obscure the hybridity of modern art objects and African art objects. Despite the competition between the two approaches, both subscribed to the notion of neat convenient cultural plurality. They effectively sustained the prevailing myth of dynamic modern over static traditional culture, and blocked any question of deeper ideological correspondences existing between "African" and "European" cultures.

But what deeper connections or correspondences could there be? In order to answer this question, let us keep in mind that each carries with it a distinct presumption about Africans and African art. "Jazz" as a musical form is quite distinct from the lyrics that may accompany a particular piece. Few would question now whether Black musicians understood the sophisticated nature of the musical form they generated. The same did not and does not hold true for the conceptual approach to form that African artists used. The traditional African artists still carry the stigma of being unconscious of even the significance of his or her conceptual approach. Griaule's (1966, p. 37) work with the Dogon indicates that they were perfectly well aware they were working conceptually. Other studies indicate that this understanding was not exclusive to the Dogon (Peek, p. 2000). In this respect modern Europe and Africa now share at the formal level similar tastes. They enjoy a conceptual approach to creating and representing, novel for early twentieth century Europe and Euro-America, but not for Africans. The

fact that, according to Powers, Fry had to draw on traditional Chinese aesthetics to conceive of the "new" aesthetic, formalism, to explain the "new" art forms, illustrates that the relations connecting the three cultures can only be partly explained by the intervening historical events. Chinese aesthetics would have been of no use to Fry without its formalist bent, and Fry would not have needed formalists aesthetics were it not for the preoccupation of the Cubists with the formal techniques of African artists. This is why Archer's methodology of separating the "logically" related-in this case formalist aspects, from the causally related-in this case a network of colonial historical relations facilitating the transmission of cultural ideas, is effective in disentangling how the different moments in the dynamic of culture work.

However, there is another strand of the "modern" story that is illustrative of how important it is to incorporate the notion of hybridity into social and cultural theory. I am speaking generally of Picasso's use of Greek mythological imagery in his work, and specifically of the Minotaur and bull imagery. The Minotaur imagery is one among other "classical" reflections that take or direct Picasso and his culture's gaze back to an ancient Mediterranean moment in Afro-European relations. The Minotaur is certainly a figure engaging some of Picasso's and his culture's brute and blind impulses. But how ironic it is that having comprehended the formal principles of African art, Picasso apparently, but only apparently, turns back to his pure European "roots," which turn out to be full of African imports.

That is at least the opinion of some scholars such as Bernal (1988), who has exposed the part a deeply institutionalized racism had to play in 'purging' classical Greek culture of any African or Semitic influences. The same forces worked subtly as an effective blinker to direct all interpretations of Picasso's work from considering any connection to Africa in his "post-cubist" work. Bernal (1991, p. 166-171) traced the

Minotaur myth to an African-Egyptian origin, the god Min, and a phallic deity. And Griaule's research among the Dogon led him to see in their myths deep connections to European Mediterranean mythology; "ram with calabash-sun its head, alternating with a bull similarly equipped, had first excited his curiosity" (Griaule, 1966, p. 209-216). Griaule, following the conventions of his time, still distinguished Mediterranean cultures from "African" ones, thus lumping ancient Egypt and North Africa with southern European Mediterranean cultures. Notwithstanding Griaule's limitations, he provides the information necessary for us to revise our thinking. Given that the basis of Picasso's radical renovation of his "style" started from a fascination with, but profound misunderstanding of, African art, his mature work can be said to have arrived at an insight about African culture that was comprehensive of the depths of its relations to Europe. Unlike artists, scholars, from either anthropology or art history, seemed unwilling to cross the boundaries of culture to make the connections even though the information was available.

Clearly, our investment in relatively impermeable cultural boundaries is deep. Though we have to acknowledge difference and plurality, the ever-shifting character of identity means we have to found our sense of secure identity on a different basis. To use an analogy, we cannot continue to presume we need to build houses when we have woken up to find ourselves living, not on land, but on the sea. A ship is needed, not a house. Furthermore, the redress of past injustices cannot be accomplished by ignoring the profound intersubjectivity of the past as well as the present. This is why even the critical multiculturalists fail to redress the profoundest of injustices when they resist seeing similarities on the pretext that it will dilute culture. By so doing they persist with the notion of culture as an organic complex, and not as a constellation of elements, from which appropriations and other configurations can be made.

Conclusion: Beyond nationalism and multicultural reservations.

If multiculturalism is to move on from the 'safe' pluralism that it has thus far inhabited it must be premised on a theory that captures the dynamic character of culture. It must represent its historical diversity, the emergence, migration, and variation of ideas and people; how cultures interact and change, why they remain relatively stable or radically change. Such a goal certainly cannot be accomplished by sanitizing cultures and histories of their gross and callous aspects; but presuming that exposing similarities, correspondences, and substantial borrowing will compromise cultural integrity also cannot do it. What is more likely is the perpetuation of skewed cultural relations. Quite simply, cultural theory in art education must take the pervasiveness of cultural hybridity and syncretism into account, if it is to get past callousness and hypersensitivity.

To make the case for centralizing hybridity in cultural theory I have attempted to show several things. First; even with the best will in the world, it is hard to escape the intuitive perception of cultures as different coherent, indeed organic, wholes, in spite of having knowledge that reveals the fragmented character of culture (Stuhr. 1999).

Second, in this regard Archer's theory of morphogenesis is most useful. Its central feature of analytical dualism, wherein she insists we allow cultural products autonomy from cultural agents, is an effective way of grasping the process of cultural stability and change. By so doing Archer avoids the major pitfalls of established cultural theories. The first of the pitfalls is conflation, which is the tendency in social theory to (a) either make people the puppets of cultural or social system, or (b) make cultural systems a mere tool of the manipulative whims of powerful agents, and (3) conceive of socio-cultural products and producers as caught in so tight a circuit of interdependence that change cannot be properly accounted for. Even though those concepts may not be strictly speaking essentialist, they nevertheless leave us with

the perception of cultural coherence at the expense of seeing cultural contradictions. Another pitfall, contextual dependence, also a product of conflation, supplies arguments for the kind of cultural relativism celebratory multiculturalism is criticized for, but which create a dilemma for social reconstructionists and critical multiculturalists seeking a more radical social justice. The contextualist argument is problematic to radical multiculturalists and social reconstructivists because it diminishes the role of contradiction in culture. They are left with little choice but to invoke human rights, which appears always to be the imposition of Western values. Their subscription to the notions of cultural coherence, integrity, and to contextualism, prevents the invocation of contradictions within culture. Three, it concedes autonomy to ideas and to human agents so that they can historically act on each other without one reduced to being the helpless product of the other.

Third and finally, through the examination of historical examples I attempt to put flesh, as it were, on the bones of Archer's cultural theory. I also seek to highlight the hybrid nature of past and present culture and the need to get beyond hypersensitivity and callousness, cognizant that issues of self-esteem are caught up in art education and culture.

Art educators must avoid confusing cultural objects and cultural producers into "organic" interdependencies that effectively make them comprehensible only to cultural insiders. Recognizing and representing specific nuances of given similarities in different cultures, within the context of the morphogenetic approach, exposes the much more uneven development of cultures, and makes "progress" less loaded with modern presumptions. Our appreciation, recognition, and preservation of difference within and among cultures will not be rooted in over-sensitivity to their "integrity" oblivious of contradictions, nor in sustaining the flawed conventional notion of a progressive West trailed by a set of tributary cultures desperate to catch up. Rather, by inserting

all cultures into a dynamic notion of culture, the past and present of each and every culture can be represented as having dynamic implications for each other. Furthermore, the nuances that differences and similarities acquire from the interaction of cultural systems or products, agents, and historical situations can be more clearly grasped along with their contingent character. The promise is of the possibility of comprehending the dynamic nature of cultural interflows and what they mean, and of a more equitable representation of diversity in curricula.

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Notes

[1] Archer does not mean to say that cultures are not in dominant and subordinate relations to each other, rather she is emphasizing the fact that the explanations hark back to the premise of cultural integration.

[2] Compare to Archer (1988) "One would simply say that the Myth portrayed culture as the perfectly integrated system, in which every element was interdependent with every other-the ultimate exemplar of compact coherent organization" (p. 2).