



## Hybridity in Two Works: *Eroshima* and *I am a Japanese writer*, from Dany Laferrière\*

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TODAY'S world is characterized by extensive human migration and spread of mass communication tools, a world that creates the illusion of a world without borders, and redefines the concept of identity and nationality. Accordingly, this transnational world creates a literature which is characterized by the life story representation of the homeless people, with a hybrid identity. This literature reveals the articulation between cultural differences through the negotiation and discussion of these differences in the third-space, the spoken space. The present research intends to show how this transnational world is represented in the world literature and how displaced people from their homeland cross the identity in relation with nationality and race and achieve a hybrid and variable identity. Accordingly, a study of two works by Dany Laferrière: *Eroshima* and *I am a Japanese writer* (*Je suis un écrivain japonais*) was done based on the post-colonial thesis of Homi Bhabha. The founders of postcolonial theory, notably Homi Bhabha, offer "a theoretical perspective on hybridity" whose function is to study the cultural and historical hybridity of the postcolonial world. That said, Bhabha's postcolonial studies will help us to solve our problem. Also, it should be noted that there are several types of hybridity: cultural, spatio-temporal, identity, and finally paratextual. Hybridity is therefore proposed as the crossing of all borders.

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In writing, hybridity can also appear formally from the paratext, that is to say in the title or in the dedication. One of Laferrière's works that constitutes the corpus of this work is entitled *Éroshima*. This term is a suitcase word, that is to say from the composition of two words: "Eros and Hiroshima". Eros, referring to the idea of love and thus to the life drive, opposes Thanatos (the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima) as the death drive. These two impulses can consequently constitute a hybrid notion which includes both together, due to their coexistence. This coexistence is seen on a notional and formal level in the idea of *Eroshima* as the title of the book. At the same time, *Eroshima* begins with a significant dedication. This dedication establishes an explicit relationship between a famous actress and the first atomic bomb. It therefore carries within it the idea of death and life, or the idea of the coexistence of Eros and Thanatos, like the title of the book, which evokes the idea of eros, and war. In this way, the author closely mixing the theme of life with that of death by means of a dedication, and also of the suitcase word that is the title of the book depicts a hybrid world in which not only the boundaries between life and death, but also the boundaries between words intermingle.

Laferrière's works presented as examples of world literature well depict this world of cultural intersection, whose main themes are immigration, exile and identity. From the first page of *Eroshima*, the author makes us think of a new world stemming from racial and cultural intersection. For example, a dialogue, established by the narrator between himself and his reader, explains that the Japanese did not mix before neither with the Whites nor with the Blacks unlike today, since Hoki, in reality Japanese, coming from the Japanese father and North American mother, currently has a romantic relationship with a Negro. All of this depicts a world in which it is possible to cross different cultures and races.

Our second novel fully fits into this perspective, since the narrator of *I am a Japanese writer*, explicitly declaring that he believes in a world without borders, where we destroy the established order, and where people get closer to each other at - beyond certain notions such as nationality or race. The narrator of this story, while giving North America as an example, exposes cultural hybridity. According to him, the United States is a country that results from the crossover between two cultures, namely American culture and that of the Yankees. It is therefore an example of cultural hybridity. At the same time, the Americanization of America has now transformed, according to the narrator, into the Japaneseization of America. In reality, since this articulation of cultural differences, which is achieved by the appropriation of desire of the other and thus by the modification of cultural signifiers, results in the Japaneseization of America and the Americanization of Japanese women, Americanized Japanese women can express themselves in the same way that Americans accept the hybridity of the world.

The transcultural world gives birth to a new concept of people. In this way, the discourse of this borderless world proposes the concept of people as a double narrative movement linked to both the past and the present. As a result, the narrator of *I am a Japanese writer*, who is stuck between past and present, lives between two times, and wishes to keep both. The narrator's discourse therefore settles down through nostalgia for the past in the interim between time and place: the time and place of his childhood, evoked by Basho, and those of his contemporaneity as an immigrant, seen by the girl in the subway. This fusion of two temporal spheres finally allows him to settle in a hybrid temporality and suitable world in which he lives.

In migratory situations, deterritorialized subjects, in the third-space, in accordance with the rules of the host country, produce a hybrid identity. In reality, being in relation to the other, the deterritorialized individual seeks a new identity which not only gives him the power to live in another time and another culture, but also allows him to be simultaneously himself and an other. Moreover, Bhabha explains that the immigrant, knowing his existence in relation to the Other, negotiates difference in third-space, and then reproduces a hybrid identity resulting from the articulation of differences, while assuming the image of the other in a partial way. As a result, the narrator of *I am a Japanese writer* when entering a Japanese restaurant compares Japanese culture with that of America. It also highlights the architectural difference of these two countries. Thus, the narrator as a subject, through his relationship to the Other and by means of a comparison, highlights the cultural and architectural difference of two different races and clearly underlines this importance of knowing the Other in the process of identification, the idea that others act as a mirror in which we see ourselves, and know ourselves. In this perspective, the character of the novel in *I am a Japanese writer*, wishing to be a Japanese writer, aims to be similar to the Japanese or to mimic them. This is exactly the case with the character of Eroshima. Also, the encounter with the Other arouses awareness of the inner lack, and the cleavage of the subject between his identity linked to his nation and the new identity adapted to the host country. To mask this lack and even partially resemble the Other, the individual therefore decides to accept the mask of the other. Accepting the mask of the other allows the character to reproduce himself like another.

According to the character of *I am a Japanese writer*, when one does not return to his country of origin for a long time, under the effect of oblivion and distance, the links, which tie man to his origin, weaken. He forgets his past in order to identify himself with the inhabitants of the host country. Therefore, by substituting one cultural or identity signifier for another, the hybridization is completed, and hybrid identities appear. Dany Laferrière, who has the experience of living in exile, represents well, in his works, this changing identity, whose examples are almost all the characters of *Eroshima* and those of *I am a Japanese writer*: including Hoki, the lover of

the narrator of *Eroshima*, who is of Japanese father and North American mother, or the wife of François, friend of the narrator of *I am a Japanese writer*, being linked to two different nations, Japanese by his mother and Spanish by his dad.

This study can help us to show that this author draw a transcultural and transnational world in his works, by introducing the question of identity and finally by representing hybrid characters, the characters that have lost their native identity, he tries to show his interest not only in the fact that he wants to be someone else but also his interest in living in a world where there is a possibility to convert the existence (becoming someone else), or to seize and obtain a new identity there.

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