

Creolization and creativity

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Abstract 'A bit of this and a bit of that; that is how newness enters the world', according to Salman Rushdie. In Ulf Hannerz's varied and voluminous work on cultural creolization, creativity and cultural 'newness' are often described. Examining this view of creativity, the essay contrasts processual and hybrid aspects of culture with its stable and structural aspects, showing how each implies a particular view of creativity. The contrast is developed through three very different kinds of examples: postcolonial literature, information technology and minority youth in Western Europe.

The issue

In the famous opening sequence of *The satanic verses*, where Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta fall out of Air India's London-bound flight 420, later to be fished miraculously out of the Channel, Gibreel improvises an English translation of an old Hindi film song: 'O, my shoes are Japanese. ... These trousers English, if you please. On my head, red Russian hat; my heart's Indian for all that' (Rushdie 1988: 5).¹ In a later essay explaining the mission of his instantly controversial novel – burned in Bradford, leading to a fatwa in Tehran, creating a decade-long global stir – Rushdie offers his view of creativity, contrasting it with the cultural purism and fear of contamination he associates with the enemies of *The satanic verses*. The book 'rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. *Mélange*, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is *how newness enters the world*. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world, and I have tried to embrace it' (Rushdie 1991: 394). This view of 'newness' corresponds well with the perspectives on cultural dynamics and change developed in Ulf Hannerz's *œuvre* for more than three decades, and although anthropological purists have never threatened with anything like a fatwa, Hannerz's position is more controversial than his congenial style of argument usually betrays. Especially in his work on globalization and cultural creolization from the late 1980s onwards, Hannerz has powerfully argued in favour of a view of cultural creativity that is far removed from any Romantic vision of the lone genius inspired by his Muse and the depths of his cultural heritage. In the networked world of flows and movement described by Hannerz in two influential books (1992, 1996) and in a number of journal articles, newness appears as a result of recontextualization, mixing and ongoing, always provisional mergers of formerly discrete symbolic realms. This article is devoted to an examination of this view of creativity, hinting at its historical origin and contrasting it with a view informed by Romantic thought, which was probably dominant in twentieth century anthropology.

But first let me say a word about the term itself. 'Creativity' is not an unproblematic term in anthropological discourse, and several of the contributors to a recent

volume on cultural creativity (Liep 2001) have serious reservations about the term. Doubtless, the concept of individual creativity associated with the arts, and particularly the worship cults engulfing individuals deemed creative, belong to modern society and make little sense in the small-scale traditional societies that formed the focus of anthropological research for most of the previous century. On the other hand, a wider definition of creativity transcending the individual as the well of creation and the arts narrowly defined as its field of expression, has received great attention in mainstream anthropology. Both Boas himself and several of his students were deeply interested in art and other forms of expressive culture, and in European anthropology, concepts like liminality (Turner 1969) and the entrepreneur (Barth 1963) were introduced as cross-culturally valid categories where potential newness was a central feature. The entrepreneur is by definition an individual who bridges formerly separate realms, thereby creating something new; and the liminal phase in social dramas, where the routines and conventions of everyday life are temporarily bracketed, enabled individuals to break away from standard interpretations and reimagine their world. Moreover, influential contributions to the study of symbol and metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Wagner 1981; but perhaps also Lévi-Strauss 1962) suggest that the very act of communication presupposes creative uses of symbols. In other words, the anthropological study of cultural or human creativity is not associated merely with research on modern societies, although the contemporary everyday meaning of creativity might suggest just that. However, it may well be argued that the fast-paced contemporary societies, saturated with mediated information, encourage particular forms or styles of creativity (or lack of such, cf. Fernandez 2001) at the expense of others. To this issue I will return.

Two prophets of the impure

Assuming that cultural globalization actually does take place – and it can easily be shown that it does, at least in the sense of intensified and accelerated contact across geographical boundaries, mediated by information technology – one may begin by asking naïvely, as many do, whether these processes lead to increased creativity or to a general ‘flattening’. Both views have their defenders. According to a classic ‘left wing’ attitude, inspired by the left-Hegelian Frankfurt school and/or by Marxism, globalization chiefly leads to increased standardization and commercialization in the culture industry, since profit-seeking capital is the driving force in the globalizing processes. Many anthropologists, influenced by Romantic ideals (whether Marxist or not), subscribe to this view – from Malinowski (1922) lamenting the impact of culture contact on the Trobriands, via Lévi-Strauss’ elegy for the small and isolated peoples in *Tristes tropiques* (1955), to Geertz’s slightly self-ironic essay on globalization (Geertz 1994) where, with an audible sigh, he concedes that ‘the good old days’ of radical cultural difference are gone.

A very different perspective is achieved if, rather than seeing globalization as an aspect of capital accumulation or as a euphemism for cultural imperialism, one regards it as a two-way process entailing a democratization of symbolic power whereby post-colonial scholars, authors and artists are enabled to define and invent the world on a par with the intellectuals of the metropolitan centres. While some see cultural collapse, lowest common denominators and blatant commercialization in contemporary

encounters between different symbolic universes, others see creative confrontation, stimulating exchanges and innovative *glocalization* (Robertson 1992). While some react to globalization's flood of signs by building dikes, others learn to swim.

Rushdie is an emblematic spokesman for the latter, optimistic position. Perhaps more than any other major novelist, he celebrates the hybridization and cultural mixing caused by international migration, global flows of ideas and the spreading of a modern world-view entailing a willingness to accept cultural change and a suspicious ambivalence towards tradition and ascribed identities.

Rushdie's position as a promoter of hybridity and the vitality of the cultural crossroads (or 'switchboards', to use one of Hannerz's terms) should be clear enough, and it has its academic parallel both in a plethora of cultural studies publications, in a lot of political theory, and in a few grounded ethnographies (such as Archetti 1999). A more complex, and in some respect opposite position is represented in one of his older contemporaries, an author who is himself placed in a similar ambivalent, hybrid cultural situation, namely V. S. Naipaul. Whereas Rushdie has an Indian Muslim background, but has spent most of his life in Britain, Naipaul is an 'East Indian from the West Indies' – an Indian from Trinidad, who emigrated to London in his late teens, a couple of years after the Second World War, and who would later return to Trinidad only very rarely (chiefly to visit his mother).

The differences between Rushdie's and Naipaul's biographies must be emphasized. While Naipaul's background is that of the struggling lower middle class in semi-rural Trinidad, Rushdie was a middle-class boy who went to public school in England. Naipaul's scepticism towards contemporary celebrations of mixing and hybridity is obviously influenced by his own class experience as a boy from the periphery, whose highest aim in life consisted in being recognized by the metropolitans. Rushdie could allow himself to take this acceptance for granted. To Naipaul, celebrations of hybridity must seem a bit like the late 1960s student left's flirtation with symbols of poverty seemed to Chairman Mao (he was outraged at their outward shabbiness), as a luxury to be afforded only by the leisured class.

Notwithstanding the differences, there is a relevant similarity between the two novelists. Both Rushdie and Naipaul are themselves located *between* distinctive cultural traditions, and their respective writings are deeply informed by their ambiguous and ambivalent positioning. About Rushdie it may be said that he spends his entire life on board a plane between London and Bombay (such as Air India's Flight 420), never being able to – or wishing to – land. His novels, with the possible exception of his first (*Grimus*, 1975) and his last (*Fury*, 2001), are hybrid products in several ways: The language is replete with original neologisms, puns, Indian English and direct adaptations from Hindi/Urdu. The narrator's perspective in the books wavers between an insider's and an outsider's view. The books moreover take place chiefly in the Indian subcontinent; this is clearly the case with *Midnight's children* (1981), *Shame* (1983) and *The moor's last sigh* (1995), while *The satanic verses* (1988) and *The ground beneath her feet* (1999) are multi-local with India as a centre of gravitation. Rushdie's sub-continental people, places and environments are presented both in a matter-of-fact way as if the readers were initiates, and in a sometimes exaggerated exoticizing way, creating a *Verfremdung* effect to his majority of non-Indian readers (and considerable irritation in India). Rushdie has turned his betwixt-and-between condition of exile into a blessing (notwithstanding the exhaust-

ing fatwa), which has given birth to a truly innovative form of literature with respect to language, form and content, by assimilating and mixing material of diverse origins.

Now moving on to Naipaul, he is simultaneously a less flashy author and a less optimistic person than Rushdie. Although he is frequently seen as not only a writer living in exile but also one writing about exile, Naipaul has never celebrated the state of exile. Indeed, he rarely uses the word itself, as it seems to impose an idea of freedom of choice upon a condition, that is displacement, which is rarely chosen, and which can be tragic or at the very least deadly serious to millions of people. To Naipaul, his lifelong enforced uprootedness appears to have been more of a personal trauma than a source of positive liberation. He regards the Trinidad of his childhood as an absurd society, where Africans and Indians had been moved by force or persuasion to work on the sugar plantations, torn away from their homes, their traditions and their cultural authenticity, fooled into believing they were a kind of Britons through colonial schooling, and then forced to reinvent themselves almost on an everyday basis upon discovering that they were not (see for example, Naipaul 1963, 1987). His early novels, from *The mystic masseur* (1957) to *A house for Mr Biswas* (1961), sharply satirize what the author sees as Trinidadian cultural promiscuity; the 'carnival mentality' which encourages people to mix, in noisy and boisterous ways, cultural stuff one has done nothing to deserve, and then creating an identity which consists of shiny surfaces without the slightest intimation of depth or inner consistency. Trinidadians, according to Naipaul, *play themselves*. In *The middle passage* (1963), he described a scene outside of a cinema in Port of Spain after a screening of *Casablanca*. All the men leaving the cinema, according to Naipaul, had immediately adopted exactly the same way of walking as Humphrey Bogart. Comic effects of this kind are abundant in Naipaul's early work. In 1962, the uprooted, Anglicized Hindu from Trinidad – disillusioned with Britain, despising the Caribbean – travelled in India, in a final attempt to find a site for cultural belonging, and it was a journey that resulted in a travelogue aptly entitled *An area of darkness* (1964); in his Nobel speech (December 2001), he described the year in India as a journey that split his life into two. Shocked by India, alienated by England, aloof from the Caribbean, Naipaul became a writer about torn identities. Several of his mature, largely tragic novels, from *The mimic men* (1967) and *In a free state* (1971) to *The enigma of arrival* (1987) and *Half a life* (2001), are about men (and a few women) who try to be something that they are not, usually because they can see no alternative. It is the dark, unprivileged side of Rushdie's brave new world.

The longing for solidity, roots, continuity and belonging is a recurrent theme throughout Naipaul's *œuvre*, but he does not like modern attempts to mime cultural authenticity. Actually, he is at his most scathing when he writes about politicized Hinduism and, even more so, about non-Arab Asian Muslims – converts, he calls them, although they strictly speaking have been Muslims their entire lives and live in countries where Islam was introduced centuries ago. However, it can also be said that the tragic grandeur of Naipaul's best books confirm an assumption, which he himself might reject, that exile and cultural hybridity are creative forces. His tragic worldview may be caused by his reading a new territory with an old map, while simultaneously realizing that the alternative to his lifelong ambivalence is not a traditional, secure identity, but a fundamentalist identity of the kind that appears precisely when one tries to enforce an old map onto a new territory.

There are two obvious analytical approaches to the kind of creativity that is expressed in contrasting ways by Rushdie and Naipaul. First, it has often been said that it is only by going abroad that one can hope to know (in the sense of *connaître*, *kennen*) one's own country. Only when one has established a certain distance to a phenomenon is one able to see it clearly. It may be that this explains why nationalism often has been developed among migrants or people who are otherwise marginal to their own culture – Napoleon was a Corsican, African nationalisms under colonialism were carved out by students in London and Paris, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy has a Jewish background, and so on.² Nostalgia and longing stimulate a creative activity, which can nonetheless be marked by despair and alienation.

Second, writings and views of 'newness', especially Rushdie's, recall eighteenth-century philosophical discourse on novelty and innovation. In *A treatise of human nature*, David Hume (1978 [1739–40]) claims, against Descartes and the rationalists, that the human mind is unable to create anything new on its own accord (what Kant later called synthetic a priori knowledge), but is limited to combining and comparing sense impressions. New concepts arise, according to Hume, through new combinations of existing ideas and sense impressions, and he mentions millenarian visions of the New Jerusalem as a typical example (*Treatise*, Book I, Sect. I). Complex ideas are simply compounds of simple ideas, which ultimately derive from impressions. According to such a conceptualization of creativity, the present age would be an era of unprecedented creativity, for never before has such a large proportion of humanity been subjected to a comparable bombardment of sense impressions.

A generation after Hume, we saw the beginnings of what might be regarded as the first cult of creativity in Western cultural history, namely Romanticism. Romantic philosophers and artists in the German language area, and to a lesser extent elsewhere in Europe, placed great emphasis on the inherent creativity of the unique individual, on inspiration (divine or otherwise) as the foundation for creativity; and also emphasized wholeness and coherence as criteria for beauty and truth. When William Blake towards the end of the eighteenth century expressed his vision to 'see the world in a grain of sand', he gave words to a widespread longing in his time to recreate the lost unity of the universe, for both modern science and technological innovations seemed to make the world a colder and more insensitive place, then as now. A Romantic view of creativity would in most cases entail a negative judgement of the general cacophony and fragmentation of our era. If creativity presupposes coherence, then the information age is not a particularly creative era.

Related views on artistic creativity (and on cultural authenticity) were widespread throughout the twentieth century. In the interwar years, it was common among intellectuals in the German-speaking area to distinguish between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*. Civilization was universal, global and shallow; culture was particular, local and deep. The Jews, it was often said, could appropriate the civilization of the Germans, but not their culture. Since each authentic culture is rooted in a place, a language and a life-world of experience, it can be translated only with difficulty, both literally and metaphorically. Actually, when Goethe's relationship to his erstwhile friend Herder (perhaps the first modern Romantic) cooled, it was in part because he felt that Herder's *Sturm und Drang* movement had insular tendencies – it was after all Goethe who said that 'he who knows no foreign language knows nothing about his own'.

A less spectacular, but related resistance to creolization and globalization is found

in contemporary discourse on food. Some time in the early 1990s, a group of European chefs met in Brussels to discuss the future of the European cuisines (cf. Eriksen 1994). In their view, regional and national cuisines were threatened by European integration, where distinctive food traditions were mixed and juxtaposed in ahistorical and disrespectful ways; the result was, in their view, a series of minor culinary catastrophes, which also threatened regional identities. According to this kind of logic (coherence is beauty; rootedness is truth), one might easily read Rushdie's work as the postmodern food of literature, so to speak. In a word, civilization is easily translatable, it travels easily and is couched in a language that makes it easy to appropriate; culture, on the other hand, is rooted, heavy and demanding. Civilization is superficial, while culture is deep. It is for this reason – following this way of thinking – that international bestsellers in the book industry are literary lightweights, the McDonalds and Disneylands of the literary world, while works of great quality have difficulties in being accepted and understood outside their local or national setting.

It might be added that many thinkers who clearly belong to the Enlightenment rather than the Romantic tradition react negatively to cultural creolization as it comes to be expressed in information society. To mention a couple of examples, in his book on television Pierre Bourdieu (1996) attacks the peculiar form of *fast thinking* that seems to thrive in the fast and fragmented world of multi-channel television; while Paul Virilio has devoted several of his recent writings to warnings against the societal and cultural effects of uncontrolled acceleration in communications technology (see Virilio 1996, 2000).

A question that might be raised here, naïvely, could simply be this: do speed, migration, creolization and uprootedness stimulate cultural creativity, or do they on the contrary have paralysing, commercializing and flattening effects? (Rushdie himself is not alien to this danger. For example, he uses the neologism 'Coca-colonization' to that effect in *The satanic verses*.) Do we see an emergent world where nobody has a cultural mother tongue, but everybody picks and chooses at random from the global supermarket of signs, like Naipaul's eclectic Trinidadians; where the imperative to choose precludes true commitment, and where the speed of transmission and turnover rates are so high anyway that there is no room for anything profound or demanding in the markets of 'creative products'? Now, whatever Adorno might have said, there is no straightforward answer to this kind of question, and I therefore proceed to raising it in a different way.

The web and the book

The cultural changes marking the transition from industrial society to information society – perhaps also the transition from the age of nation-states to a global/global age – may be described, by analogy, through the contrast between the logic of the book and the logic of hypertext. The book is linear, sequential and authoritarian. It offers direction, coherence and progression. In works of both fiction and non-fiction, an inner relation between chapters is assumed; they should be developed in a cumulative way. A plot in a typical novel should have a beginning, middle and end, and the substance of most non-fiction books is wrapped in an introduction and an end (or conclusion), which creates the illusion of the book as a self-sustaining universe, a unity sufficient unto itself. The logic of the book is the logic of industrial society and

the idea of progress. Reading has its ends. One may rarely jump back and forth in a novel or textbook; in order to understand it, one has to follow the linear structure laid out by the author – from page 1 onwards.

Hyperlinked information on the World Wide Web and elsewhere follows a fundamentally different logic. All web pages are organized horizontally. They are not placed in a particular order deemed necessary, and they presuppose that an active user filters information and finds his or her own paths through the labyrinth. There are scarcely two persons who have exactly the same list of sites under Netscape's 'Bookmarks' menu. Although there are authors who have made entire books available on the Web, this is far from the typical way in which the medium is used. Just as the technology and materiality of the book encourages long, continuous, cumulative reasoning, the Web encourages short texts hyperlinked in a decentralized and networked way with an infinite number of other short texts. On the Web, everything is Chapter 1, page 1. Creating a coherent whole of selected web pages presupposes a creative process of the Rushdie/Hume kind.

In a sense, the WWW is to multi-channel television what the book is to single-channel television. The old national monopolies or semi-monopolies of broadcasting, which dominated television in most of the world until the early 1980s, were able to broadcast slow, cumulative, linear programmes, knowing that the viewers had little choice but to stay tuned. Today's TV channels have to compose their programmes on the basis of the knowledge that viewers sit impatiently with their remote control on the armrest, ready to switch channels at the first indication of boredom and inertia. While the author of a book takes the reader by the hand and takes her on a guided tour to reality, the Web author can only hope to catch the reader's attention for a few fleeting moments, and will normally restrict himself to offering a fragment, a single jigsaw piece; and the other pieces are located in different places to different readers/surfers.

It is common among intellectuals to see this development as a history of decay and deterioration. The slick surfaces, the fast thinkers and the cheap and catchy immediately understandable phenomena take over, it is said. The WWW and contemporary television stand still at an enormous speed – there is a lot of action, but no real development. This widespread pessimistic view deserves critical scrutiny.

In his visionary books on technology and society written in the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan delved into the effects of television on culture and individual perception. He described writing, expressed through 'the Gutenberg Galaxy' – books and print – as a fragmenting medium that reduced the multiplicities of the world to black signs on a white background. Literacy and printing, according to McLuhan, replaced 'an ear with an eye' (McLuhan 1964). The faculty of seeing became privileged among the five senses, and all information deemed relevant could be obtained through the eyes. The other senses became dormant. McLuhan, moreover, regarded writing as a cognitive prison; it forced a linear and logical structure upon thought, and led to a loss of wholeness and coherence. By contrast, he saw television as liberating since it communicated to several senses simultaneously, in a richer and more complete way than writing was able to do. In later writings, McLuhan spoke of the transition from writing to multimedia (TV) as a liberation from the total dominance of the left brain hemisphere (logical, analytical), giving the right brain hemisphere (holistic, synthesizing, intuitive) its due. When McLuhan somewhere writes cryptically about the 'orientalization of the Occident', he clearly has such a change in mind.

Some of McLuhan's best-known books, such as the snappy, pointed and provocative *Understanding media* (1964) and the pop-art collage *The medium is the message* (McLuhan and Fiore 1967) not only promote, but illustrate his thinking. His writing comprises a mixture of academic prose, journalism, punning and advertising-like slogans, with extensive use of literary effects such as hyperbole and metaphor. The books may be read sideways, backwards and forwards. The connections between the chapters are often unclear, and the chapters do not follow each other in strict linear sequences. These texts could easily be adapted to the hypertext format. Indeed, McLuhan seemed to anticipate hypertext when, in *The medium is the message*, he described the new Xerox copying technology as a means by which anyone could construct his or her own texts through copying favourite pages from various sources and reassembling them according to whim.

Around the same time as McLuhan wrote *Understanding media*, Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote *La pensée sauvage* (1962), a book about thinking and classification that strove to make sense of totemic thought in traditional societies. The first chapter of Lévi-Strauss's great book is nevertheless strongly reminiscent of McLuhan's thoughts. This is where he introduces the famous distinction between the *bricoleur* and the *ingenieur*. The contrast refers to two styles of thought; the former characterizes non-literate societies, while the latter dominates in 'our kind of society'. What the *bricoleur* is up to when he creates something new amounts to – well, *bricolage* – restructuring and reshuffling pre-existing materials, like my brother did back in the 1970s when he built a light organ from a defective dishwashing machine. The engineer, by contrast, works on the basis of the abstract technology of writing and numbers, and thus creates his ideas and objects with the aid of logic, mathematics and other abstractions.

The engineer works on abstractions with a concrete potential, while the *bricoleur* abstracts from the concrete (recall the title of this chapter: 'The science of the concrete', 'La science du concret'). The *bricoleur* works in an associative, poetical, metaphorical-metonymical way; the engineer works in a sequential, unambiguous and analytical way. Towards the end of the chapter, Lévi-Strauss remarks that a manner of thinking akin to *bricolage* can still be identified in the societies based on writing, but only in the world of art, which is located 'half-way between scientific knowledge and mythical or magical thought' – he mentions poetry and music as two typical expressions.

The engineer splits, the *bricoleur* unites. The engineer represents an analytical logic, while the *bricoleur* represents a synthetic logic. Coherence is poised against fragments, mythical, reversible time against linear, irreversible time, tropes against literal speech.

The similarities between these arguments from McLuhan and Lévi-Strauss are striking, but whereas Lévi-Strauss develops a contrast between non-literate and literate societies, it may seem as if McLuhan introduces a contrast between literate and post-literate societies. Without drawing the parallel too far, it may perhaps be said that McLuhan predicts the return of the *bricoleur* in the age of television.³ Today, many of McLuhan's points are seen as surprisingly relevant for the Internet, and the influential Californian magazine *WIRED* virtually made him their patron saint in the mid-1990s. Although the Web is still mainly a medium based on writing, it is liberated from most of the constraints of the book. The book is closed; the web is open.

Against this background, it may not be entirely irrelevant to point out that surveys among Scandinavian adolescents in the 1990s indicated that many of them would rather work in a recording studio (where they might get the opportunity to produce non-linear, rhythmic, repetitive dance music) than enrol at, say, an engineering college. In all Western countries, the interest in engineering as a career has been declining since the 1960s. It may seem, then, that young people prefer to be post-modern *bricoleurs* than modern engineers. Whatever the case may be, McLuhan heralds a time dominated by a form of creativity liberated by the crutches of science and the rails of logic, where the creative powers of humanity are better depicted as mindmaps than as a bullet list; where horizontal, associative connections replace vertical, hierarchical and logical ones.

Lévi-Strauss says that the universe of the *bricoleur* or mythical thinker is limited, while the world of the engineer or scientific thinker is open and, in principle, unlimited. 'The peculiar characteristic of mythical thought', he writes (1962: 31), 'consists in expressing oneself through a repertoire which is heterogeneous and also, even if it may be large, limited.' He adds that considerable creative originality may emerge from such a limited repertoire. 'Like *bricolage* at the technical level, mythical thinking may, at the intellectual level, achieve unpredicted and brilliant results' (Lévi-Strauss 1962: 33).

The reader will have noted the parallel between the creativity of the *bricoleur*, as Lévi-Strauss describes it, and Hume's view of novelty. Yet it may seem far-fetched to ascribe *bricolage* qualities to the contemporary era. For is not one of the defining traits of the information age precisely the fact of unlimited access to information; an infinite, open universe that in no way may be compared with the environment of Amazonian tribes? Perhaps, but no matter how many web pages there are on the WWW, the number of pages accessed by each user, and even the total number of pages, is finite. Can one not say that both web designers and web users create newness by making new links between information that is already there? And can one not similarly say that the remote control operator consciously or unconsciously creates his or her own totality, or jigsaw, by producing his or her own collage of images and 'shows' by switching between channels? The universe of television is doubtless limited and finite even if one were blessed with a couple of hundred digital channels, and to the extent that the viewer creates something him- or herself, the act of creation is more closely related to the horizontal, intuitive style of the *bricoleur* than to the goal-rational, linear style of the engineer.

Television, food and the Internet have been mentioned. Another field in contemporary 'creolized' culture that seems to satisfy the requirements of *bricolage* (admittedly in a looser sense than Lévi-Strauss intended) is rhythmic popular music. As the composer, musician and producer Brian Eno remarks in his autobiography *A year with swollen appendices* (Eno 1996), it seemed possible to distinguish between historical trends and developments in popular music up to the early 1990s. Glam, punk, heavy metal and reggae came from somewhere, had their distinct waxing and waning, and were replaced by other trends. In more recent years, Eno claims, nothing significant has happened apart from recombinations of existing elements and recurring retro movements and waves of nostalgia. Explicitly hybrid forms such as world music are the most obvious examples, but the tendency to recycle and remix is obvious in pop, rock and techno as well. The situation has been described as that of a

time warp, where all postwar trends coexist and intermingle in new ways, but where there is no sense of development or direction (Eriksen 2001). At the same time as the best-selling popular artists remain people like Bob Dylan and Phil Collins (who have been active on the circuit for thirty to forty years), the most popular dance music among young people is non-linear, rhythmic and repetitive, recalling the temporal structures of African drumming or Javanese gamelan music rather than the linear time structures of, say, Beethoven, Miles Davis or Led Zeppelin. The Jamaican music form *dub*, which has mutated and spread all over the world under a variety of labels, is an explicit form of recycling where existing material is manipulated in the recording studio. As an aside, let me add that the term *intertextuality* has been one of the most common trade words in literary theory since the 1980s, a word that refers to the relationship between ‘new’ texts and older texts. Radical theorists may accordingly suggest that everything has been written before; what remains to do for the creative artist is, as it were, to combine existing texts in new ways. Critics might say that this is exactly what an author such as Salman Rushdie does and that the ‘seething cauldrons’ of cosmopolitan culturally-creolized cities produce little of lasting artistic value other than a fast-moving, never-ending string of reconfigurations and meta-commentaries, adding little or nothing to existing works of art.

Identity politics

I first tried to approach the question of creativity in the age of intensified cultural creolization through a discussion of postcolonial literature, represented through Rushdie and Naipaul. The second attempt consisted of a discussion of the linear logic of the book (and single-channel television) versus the non-linear logic of the WWW (and multi-channel television), tentatively placed in a wider context of cultural history where the era of the book, the golden age of engineering, appears as a parentheses or a tunnel, not as an end-product – and where a holistic, mythical and poetically integrating way of thinking both precedes and follows the ‘Gutenberg galaxy’. My third approach seeks to illuminate a further aspect of globalization, creolization and redundancy of information, namely cultural identity. For the sake of the argument, I shall concentrate on a group of people who more obviously than others embody the creative potential, as well as some of the predicaments, of the shrinking of the globe and the concomitant cultural implosions. They are to the rooted, national cultures what a web designer is to a printer, a *bricoleur* to an engineer, or a Salman Rushdie to a Knut Hamsun.

On the one hand, youth in contemporary society can draw on an enormous repertoire of experiences and impressions, which at least in theory enables them to link up with many different kinds of group, which are not necessarily based on ethnic, local, national or religious belonging. On the other hand, children of immigrants, usually spoken of as ‘second generation’, are exposed to conflicting sets of values – one set at home, another outside. Moreover, they are quite often confronted with notions among the natives to the effect that they do not belong there. This may happen in everyday situations, as when a Danish-born boy with a Turkish appearance and name is asked whether he understands Danish or when he is going back; or it could happen in public arenas such as the labour market, where ethnic discrimination is much more widespread than it has been possible to prove statistically.

Simply put, we may say that young people of the second generation who find themselves in this kind of situation are offered three families of options: *pure identities*, *hyphenated identities* or *creole identities*.

The pure identity is the choice of the puritan or traditionalist; this is the option offered by conservative religious people and identity politicians. This identity is based on a contrast, frequently phrased as a conflict or an enemy image, *vis-à-vis* the others: It is thanks to my differences in relation to other groups based on primordial, imperative characteristics, that I may appear as an authentic individual with a secure identity and an undisputed group membership. This option has the obvious advantage of creating order, neat boundaries and predictability. The pure identities, whether we choose to call them fundamentalist or not, neutralize the chaos of the surroundings and liberate the individual from ambivalence and impossible dilemmas. As a strict *pater familias*, the pure identities mark boundaries, define rules for conduct, and prohibit negotiations over values and morality. Many members of minorities in Western Europe have been tempted by the pure identities, which among other things may be a means to obtain a positive view of oneself in a situation of systematic discrimination. The cost is nonetheless likely to be alienation from the host society and great personal frustration, for the pure identities have to be defended and reproduced in modern, culturally mixed surroundings where infinite individual choice is celebrated.

The hyphenated identities are attempts to bridge two discrete, bounded categories: Turkish–Danish, Kurdish–Swedish, Norwegian–American and so on. Many members of minorities describe their basic identity in this way. They may or may not have a mother tongue that is distinct from the majority language, childhood memories from another country and various customs and rituals that are distinctive, but at the same time they have adapted to the new country. They may live in a ‘Turkish’ way inside the house and within ethnic networks, but in public arenas they behave like everybody else. The hyphenated identities presuppose that there are clear boundaries between the groups in question and thus require conscious or unconscious code switching.

The third option, which I have called the creole identity, distinguishes itself from the former two in that it does not recognize the existence of pure, discrete cultures. Its culture concept is akin to the one Hannerz developed in *Cultural complexity*, while both pure and hyphenated identities retain the Romantic and Boasian concept of culture. Whereas pure identities draw boundaries around one culture and hyphenated identities around two, creole identity represents a degree of mixing that has reached a point where it is no longer feasible to talk of hyphens and boundaries. People who identify in this way may be Muslims, for example, but at the same time may well eat pork and drink beer. They may have sex before marriage, but at the same time accept a marriage according to their parents’ wish. Some of them may eat pizzas with curry sauce; they may read *Hürriyet* and *Dagens Nyheter*; they may go to the mosque one day and to a disco the next. This kind of identification represents the realization, at the social and inter-subjective level, of the cultural changes I described earlier. While pure identities try to keep creolization out and hyphenated identities are attempts to use two old maps to make sense of a new territory, the creole identity has discarded the old map and is in the process of drawing a new one. While fundamentalism and stagnation are dangers for the pure identities, continuous ambivalence and pressure to make new decisions are an aspect of the creole ones.

Now it may seem as if I have contrived to describe a kind of developmental process, beginning with ethnic entrenchment, moves to an intermediate solution with a hyphen and ends with the dissolution of boundaries. However, the situation is often the opposite. Many immigrants to Scandinavia, Britain and other parts of Western Europe were not strongly preoccupied by religion, culture and ethnicity when they arrived. Their relationship to religion tended to be relaxed; they might practise their religion without a fuss; they had no strong views about Koranic schools or home language teaching, and they generally adapted to the host society as well as they could. Fairly soon, they nevertheless discovered that they were perceived as aliens, as *Gastarbeiter*, even after several years of residence, and they then adopted the classifications of the natives and began to think of themselves primarily as Turks, Pakistanis, Vietnamese and so on. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, and particularly after the Gulf War, the category 'Muslim' replaced several national and ethnic classifications, seen both from the outside and from the inside. When members of these groups then discover that they do not get equal treatment in practice even if their formal rights indicate they should, many of them react with cultural puritanism and identity politics. (It must be mentioned that this politicization of culture does not necessarily have anything to do with political Islam. In Norway, the most militant groups involved in identity politics, apart from Norwegians and Sami, have in recent years been people of African origin.) In general, identity hypochondria is one of the most common ailments of our times; one goes around with a vague feeling that something is wrong with one's identity, and then one may end up with a morose novelist, a common-sensical professor, a confident and serene mullah or even a sexual partner in order to be healed (see Kureishi 1995 for a brilliant, fictional depiction of this predicament).

All three identity alternatives I have described presuppose cultural creativity and all of them, incidentally, are consistent with the view of creativity that I have associated variously with Hume and the Scottish Enlightenment, postcolonial writing and new information technology. What these perspectives have in common, which justifies their inclusion side by side in an essay on creolization, is that they all imply a form of creativity that consists in reconfigurations of existing materials rather than pure invention. Traditionalism and fundamentalism demand innovation because a lost tradition can never merely be reawakened, but must be reinvented. Hyphenated identities require that one finds a balancing point and develops some criteria in order to be able to combine input from two distinctive cultural universes. The most dynamic, and perhaps most genuinely creative cultural identity is nonetheless the creole one, which cannot draw on existing classifications but is forced to transcend them. A creole identity that rejects the boundary logic of hyphenated and pure identities has to define and redefine itself continuously; it has to *rebuild the ship at sea*.

An analytical option

It may be possible to establish an initially convincing set of analytically productive dichotomies on the basis of the foregoing discussion, beginning by contrasting structure and process, and then establish a list of characteristic traits under each heading. On the one hand we have *bricolage* and McLuhan's holistic communication, cultural cosmopolitans or creoles, Rushdie's mixed universe, the World Wide Web, the universalism of the concept of civilization, and ambivalence. On the other hand,

we have linear, causal thought, the ideas from Romanticism about roots and organic growth, cultural traditionalists, the sequential structure of the book, the particularism of the concept of culture and the counter-reactions of fundamentalism. This kind of dichotomy – fundamentalism versus ambivalence, closure versus openness – can be helpful in an attempt to understand the relationship between culture and politics in our era (see for example, Bauman 1991; Castells 1997). Yet it is easy to see that dichotomous thought of this kind becomes too simple. For it is easy to identify particularistic, ‘locally delineated’ expressions of WWW *bricolage* on the Net – Miller and Slater (2000), for example, have shown that Internet use in Trinidad has *strengthened* local and national identities. Moreover, some of the most universalistic literature that has ever been written is grounded in local worlds – Dickens and Dostoyevsky! Cosmopolitan uprootedness can also lead to a strong, excluding (and indeed fundamentalist) sense of identity, and close-knit local *Gemeinschaften* may turn out to be both open and generous to the outside world. Thus it may seem as if any intention I might have had about establishing some useful contrasts in order to make sense of a networked, fluid, creolized, chaotic landscape, collapses.

The solution may consist in finding more appropriate terms to describe the contrast and, also, distinguishing between two levels of social reality. Regarding *thought and communication*, the distinction between the linear, hierarchical and the non-linear, horizontal is fundamental. Regarding aspects of *social and cultural identification*, the relationship between purity/closure on the one hand, and impurity/openness on the other, is similarly important. Each of the alternatives emerging from these sets of contrasts, moreover, creates a space for a peculiar form of creativity.

Cognitive linearity and social openness characterize industrial society: the dominant mode of thought is causal, while the social form ‘swallows up’ diverse groups and assimilates them. Structured change is perceived as a good and normal thing, whether in the arts or in social planning. Similarly, cognitive non-linearity and social closure characterize the traditional societies Lévi-Strauss wrote about. Cognitive linearity and social closure could be said to be a typical combination of contemporary identity politics, where the political reasoning is modern and linear, while the boundaries of the identity category are guarded zealously.

The most important form of information society is the combination of cognitive non-linearity and social openness: movement and openness. This society, which has unwittingly relinquished its moorings, is the kind of society Ulf Hannerz has been foremost among anthropologists in describing, modelling and analysing, and his foresight is evident in the fact that when students encounter his books – at my department, it might just as well be *Exploring the city* (1980) as one of his later works – they are excited by the newness and creativity seeping out of every page. ‘A bit of this and a bit of that’ it may be, but it works admirably. Like the worlds he describes, Hannerz’s writings are full of creole creativity and thus embody the *Zeitgeist* in at least two ways. As the Catholic McLuhan might have expressed it: we have left monotheism and have entered the era of intellectual Hinduism.

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Notes

1. The reference is to Raj Kapoor's 1955 film *Shri 420*, 'Mr 420'. In India, the number 420 suggests corruption and vice. The lyrics to the first verse of the song 'Mera joota hai japaani' are: 'Mera joota hai Japani/Ye pataloon hai inglistani/Sar pe lal topi roosi/Par bhi dil hai hindustani', that is, 'My shoes are Japanese/And the trousers are English/The cap on my head is Russian/But my heart is Indian.' Although there is probably no direct connection, the song inevitably recalls Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, who, in response to Monsieur Ballon's question, 'But you are Norwegian?' exclaims: 'Of birth – yes! But of character a citizen of the world' – before moving on to a list of references indicating his composite identity ranging from German books, French waistcoats and *esprit*, and English common sense to Italian *dolce far niente* and Swedish steel!
2. Conversely, the 'creole pioneers' described by Anderson (1991) as an early vanguard of nationalism, developed locally based nationalisms in New Spain *in opposition to* the colonial power.
3. It is unlikely that Lévi-Strauss and McLuhan were aware of each other at the time. However, the general ideas on literacy and illiteracy that they drew on were readily available in books and journals – although Lévi-Strauss would probably deny their influence on his thought. In Jack Goody's *The domestication of the savage mind* (Goody 1977), a treatise on the social and cultural consequences of writing, these influences, as well as their echoes in Lévi-Strauss' book, are evident.

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