

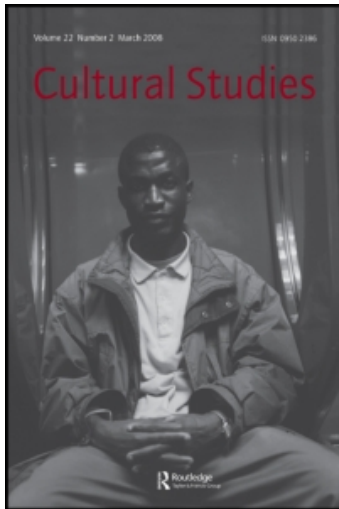
This article was downloaded by: [Ingenta Content Distribution - Routledge]

On: 18 August 2008

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 791963552]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Cultural Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713684873>

HYBRIDITY THEORY AND KINSHIP THINKING

Peter Wade

Online Publication Date: 01 September 2005

To cite this Article Wade, Peter(2005)'HYBRIDITY THEORY AND KINSHIP THINKING',Cultural Studies,19:5,602 — 621

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/09502380500365507

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09502380500365507>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

HYBRIDITY THEORY AND KINSHIP THINKING

A parallel is posited between the ways hybridity and kinship are thought about in Western contexts, challenging the idea that kinship and biology tend to lead to narrow, roots-oriented, essentialized definitions of identity. Rather than being the opposite of rhizomic, diasporic hybridity, kinship and biology partake of the tension between roots and routes that is characteristic of all hybridity. Anthropological evidence on the character of Western kinship thinking is examined to elucidate some features of its flexibility. Theories of hybridity are seen as being themselves a type of kinship thinking.

Keywords hybridity; kinship; identity; biology; essentialism

Introduction

Concepts of hybridity – and related ones of *mestizaje*, syncretism, creolization, *mélange*, *métissage*, mixture – have been widely deployed in cultural theory, especially in relation to fields in which racial and ethnic identifications are made (Anzaldúa 1987, Bhabha 1994, García Canclini 1995, Gilroy 2000, Hale 1996, 1999, Ifekwunigwe 1999, Kapchan & Strong 1999, Nelson 1999, Smith 1997, Werbner & Modood 1997, Young 1995). The concept of diaspora, although not at first sight nor necessarily associated with processes of mixing, may be deployed to the same kind of effect, evoking a context or dynamic which creates mixing (Brah 1996, Hall 1996, Gilroy 2000).

In much of this work, there is a current that sees hybridity as potentially subversive of dominant ideologies and practices and leading to the dislocation and destabilization of entrenched essentialisms, often with a focus on racial and ethnic categories and boundaries, and frequently in colonial and post-colonial contexts. On the other hand, there is also an awareness that hybridity carries with it some other possibilities and meanings, which are seen in a less positive light. These possibilities revolve around ideas of roots, genealogical kinship links, biology and essentialism. As Kapchan and Strong (1999, p. 242) put it, 'There is hybridity that may refer to and reify history and genealogy, for example, and hybridity that seems to make a mockery of it'. In a similar vein, Young (1995, pp. 24–5) distinguishes between 'organic' and 'intentional'

modes of hybridity (see below). We are faced with a dualism in hybridity theory between potentially positive hybridity, which is dynamic, progressive, diasporic, rhizomic, subversive, anti-essentialist, routes-oriented and based on collage, montage and cut-and-mix; and a potentially negative hybridity, which is biological, genealogical, kinship-based, essentialist, roots-oriented and based on simple ideas of combining two wholes to make a third whole.

I argue that this dualism involves a narrow and stereotyped understanding of biology and kinship. Both of these domains are in fact characterized by dynamic processes of cultural practice which display their own tensions between roots and routes, between essentialisms and non-essentialisms, between being and becoming. Recognizing this does not dissolve the basic dualism outlined above – it makes biology and kinship straddle the divide, as hybridity itself is said to do – but it re-situates kinship and biology in important ways. It carries the theoretically and politically important implication that identities which invoke either kinship and/or biology (e.g. blood, genes) as tropes of belonging and identification should not necessarily or automatically be seen as essentialist (or needing justification in terms of their ‘strategic essentialism’), exclusivist, politically conservative, absolutist or fundamentalist.

At the same time, I argue that Western kinship thinking actually supplies a model that motivates hybridity theorizing. Here I am inspired by Strathern who argues that ideas about kinship in the West supply ways for thinking about social continuity and social change more generally (Strathern 1992) and for thinking about the relationship between scientific knowledge and society (Strathern 2003). While hybridity theorists may distrust kinship and the biology they think it involves, Western notions of kinship actually involve precisely the tensions between roots and routes, tradition and innovation, past and future, sameness and difference, and being and becoming with which theorists populate their ideas about hybridity.

Hybridity as destabilizing

I will begin by fleshing out the dualism in hybridity theory that constructs negative and positive forms of hybridity and tends to consign kinship and biology to the negative side of the divide.

There are various theorists who see hybridity as having potentially positive effects. There are some grounds for this in Bakhtin’s early explorations of linguistic hybridity, whether of the intentional variety in which the double meanings of a word or utterance were in ironic and subversive relation to each other, or of the organic variety in which undirected processes of cultural mixture held out the possibility of seeing the world anew (Young 1995, pp. 20–2, Werbner 1997b, pp. 4–5). Recent scholars have gone further in

seeing in hybridity possible challenges to existing orders and essentialist categorizations: Papastergiadis (1997, p. 273) notes that Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak are routinely cited in this respect and that 'At the broadest level of conceptual debate there seems to be a consensus over the utility of hybridity as antidote to essentialist subjectivity'. Hale (1996, p. 41) notes a recent tendency among some Latin Americanists to link 'hybrid identities in Latin America to promising new forms of oppositional politics'. Yet theorists have also noted that hybridity can simply reinforce the notion of two original, 'parent' wholes that create a third, hybrid 'offspring' (Friedman 1997, Hutnyk 1997).

Robert Young has usefully elaborated the distinction between these two ways of conceptualizing hybridity and mixture. Drawing on Bakhtin and Hall, he outlines first a hybridization that is 'organic' (Bakhtin's term) and that merges different identities into a new forms that may also be contestatory (as, in Hall's argument, varied West Indian and other Afro identities merged in the UK to form a common 'Black' identity in the fight against racism). Then, however, he goes on to describe a second more radical form of hybridization that is 'intentional' (again, Bakhtin) and that is diasporic, 'intervening as a form of subversion, translation, transformation'. He cites Hall's key 1989 article on the 'new ethnicities' to the effect that this form is a process of 'unsettling, recombination, hybridization and 'cut and mix''. He states: 'Hybridization as creolization involves fusion, the creation of a new form, which can then be set against the old form, of which it is partly made up. Hybridization as 'raceless chaos' by contrast, produces no stable new form but rather something closer to Bhabha's restless, uneasy, interstitial hybridity: a radical heterogeneity, discontinuity, the permanent revolution of forms'.¹ Young identifies the first form of hybridity with processes of 'homogenization' and with nineteenth-century style racialological assumptions about 'the prior existence of pure, fixed, and separate antecedents'. The second diasporic form of hybridity is in tension with the first form and, as it were, haunted by it: 'hybridity has not slipped out of the mantle of the past' and has not yet been 'fully redeployed and reinflected' by cultural theorists (Young 1995, pp. 24–5). As Kapchan and Strong (1999, p. 240) note, 'The biological root of the metaphor of hybridity was a source of considerable ambivalence' for many of the contributors to their collection of papers on hybridity.

Young hints that the two forms of hybridity are in an historical relation of chronological shift in which a newer, more positive form is being weighed down by the older, anachronistic, negative form, but he complicates this straightaway by citing Hall to the effect that the two forms of hybridity 'constantly overlap and interweave' (Young 1995, p. 24). Hall is also talking about chronological developments in the form of the recent emergence of new forms of hybrid and diasporic identities in the UK that do not replace older forms but do contest them (Hall 1996, pp. 442–3), but the dualism in forms

of hybridity is clearly not simply chronological. Gilroy's work on the Black Atlantic also makes clear that diasporic processes of identity formation are not confined to postmodern contexts (Gilroy 1993).

Still, it is clear that the two forms of hybridity are in tension. In noting that the recent UK black experience as a diaspora experience is still fed by 'deep inheritance... of aesthetic traditions from Asian and African culture', and adding that '*in spite of* these rich cultural 'roots', the new cultural politics is operating on new and quite distinct ground – specifically, contestation over what it means to be British', Hall also implies a relation of opposition between roots and diaspora (Hall 1996, p. 447, emphasis added). He does not reject these roots, but he suggests that in the new cultural politics, roots are 're-experienced through the categories of the present' (Hall 1996, p. 448).

In Gilroy's recent work, there is not so much a double view of hybridity itself as a view of diaspora pitted against kinship and genealogy. The concept of diaspora is an antidote to what he calls 'camp-thinking' (2000, p. 84) which involves oppositional, exclusive and essentialist modes of thought about people and culture that rest on assumptions of purity and absolute cultural identities. Diaspora identities, in contrast, are 'creolized, syncretized, hybridized and chronically impure cultural forms' (2000, p. 129). The diaspora concept can be 'explicitly antinational' and can have 'de-stabilizing and subversive effects' (2000, p. 128). It offers 'a ready alternative to the stern discipline of primordial kinship and rooted belonging': 'As an alternative to the metaphysics of 'race', nation and bounded culture coded into the body, diaspora is a concept that problematizes the cultural and historical mechanics of belonging' (2000, p. 123). Referring to the idea of the 'changing same' – a concept coined in the 1960s by Leroi Jones as a motif to represent the historical changes of black music in America and taken up by Gilroy to talk of hybrid diaspora identities – he says that it is not an 'invariant essence' but something that is 'ceaselessly reprocessed'. Diaspora is 'invariably promiscuous' and it challenges us 'to apprehend mutable forms that can redefine the idea of culture through a reconciliation with movement and complex, dynamic variation' (Gilroy 2000, pp. 129–30).

One way of thinking about the duality that Young outlines is in terms of organic kinship metaphors versus metaphors of artistic creation. Young's hybridity-as-creolization evokes the coming together of parents to create a child. This genealogical mode of hybridity is linked to ideas about kinship roots and belonging. Gilroy rejects such models: the concept of diaspora and the hybridities it provokes offer 'a ready alternative to the stern discipline of primordial kinship and rooted belonging' (2000, p. 123). He states that the nodes that make up the chaotic model of diaspora 'are not successive stages in a genealogical account of kin relations – equivalent to single branches on a family tree. One does not beget the other in a comforting sequence of ethnic teleology' (2000, p. 128).

In contrast, the diasporic hybridity that Young refers to parallels the creative processes of montage, collage, sampling and bricolage; processes that occur in the workshop and the studio and that involve the creative appropriation of elements and their recontextualization and resignification. There is something much more dynamic, random and unpredictable about such processes; more intentional than organic, to use Young's terms. One key metaphor for hybrid proliferations and diasporic dynamics has been the rhizome, as elaborated by Deleuze and Guattari (1988). The rhizome is a useful motif because it describes root systems that spread continuously in all directions, from random nodes, creating complex networks of unpredictable shape that are in constant process. The metaphor breaks with the idea of origins, linear progressions and genealogical tree-like roots.

Hybridity and kinship thinking

In the literature on what I will call rhizomic hybridity, difference proliferates, unpredictably and in a radically heterogeneous way. This is what distinguishes it from what I will call genealogical hybridity, in which difference apparently proceeds in an orderly progression of kin sequences, structured by the constraints of biological reproduction. All the more interesting, then, is the fact that rhizomic hybridity still seems to call forth kinship terminology from its supporters.

Salman Rushdie, for example, talks of the 'hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs'. His work, he says, 'rejoices in the 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*' (cited in Nash 1995, p. 958, original emphasis). For Bhabha, who takes up Rushdie's phrase, the entry of newness into the world is 'not part of the 'progressivist' division between past and present' (Bhabha 1994, p. 227) and thus perhaps does not obey a logic of kinship sequences, yet one cannot help but notice the evident evocation of procreation and birth.

In Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (a text often cited as evoking rhizomic modes of hybridity), the hero starts out by saying: 'My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories' (Kureishi 1990, p. 3). Kureishi describes the birth of a new breed from what can only be understood as two parental histories.

Gilroy, too, is drawn to talk in kinship metaphors, although more guardedly. Describing the work of two eighteenth-century ex-slave writers, Equiano and Wheatley, Gilroy (2000, p. 117) comments that their writings, as 'complex, compound formations', leave a legacy that is 'a mix, a hybrid'. He

continues: 'Its recombinant form is indebted to its 'parent' cultures but remains assertively and insubordinately a bastard. It reproduces neither of the supposedly anterior purities that gave rise to it in anything like unmodified form'. We have already seen that diaspora is 'invariably promiscuous' (Gilroy 2000, p. 129). It is interesting that Gilroy uses kinship metaphors but in transgressive mode – bastardy, promiscuity – as if 'normal' kinship would be based on the reproduction of anterior purities.

This unexpected appearance of kinship language alerts me to the possibility that behind both notions of hybridity, including the second rhizomic form in which difference is interstitial, dynamic and unpredictable, lies a profound metaphor of kinship – specifically Western, or Euro-American, kinship. I contend that, rather than Western kinship thinking being confined to genealogical versions of hybridity, and thus essentially opposed to rhizomic versions of hybridity, such thinking has parallels with both types of hybridity. This means that kinship, genealogy and related constructs of biology do not stand in a relation of opposition to rhizomic hybridity – as necessarily conservative, essentialist and linked to primordial identities, roots and belonging – but rather are structured by the same tension between being and becoming.

To understand this, we need to see that kinship does not always lead to primordality, nor does it necessarily consist of comforting teleological sequences. On the contrary, Western models of kinship have a predictable unpredictability built into them. The predictably unpredictable sequences of kinship may be read – especially when looking backwards – as comforting teleologies, but this is not necessarily so. Western kinship models have a dynamic and diversifying quality to them, conjuring images of endless proliferation. This is one aspect of Western kinship models, which refers to the way organic processes of reproduction are imagined and indicates that biological reproduction may be conceived of as an unpredictable non-teleological process. There is also a second aspect to Western kinship thinking that balances the role of biology, or more broadly nature, with the role of sociality, or culture, or performance, in creating and defining kin and relatedness. In this aspect, kinship models, like hybridity theories, have a dual quality in which both roots and performance, or being and becoming, are integral to ideas about difference and sameness. My argument, then, is that, although cultural theorists may oppose the concept of rhizomic hybridity to that of kinship, kinship thinking is considerably more complex than implied in such an opposition and includes rhizomic notions of hybridity. I also think that the strong parallels between Western kinship models and hybridity theorizing, plus the unexpected appearance of kinship language in descriptions of rhizomic hybridity, suggest that kinship thinking is implicitly supplying a model that structures and motivates theories about hybridizing processes of cultural change.

Let us now look at some anthropological work on the character of Western kinship thinking. I make two main arguments here. First, Strathern's work on kinship can be used to contest the idea that Euro-American kinship is about a stern discipline of primordality or a comfortable teleological progression of sequences. Second, recent work in what has come to be called 'new kinship studies' has shown that Western kinship, while founded in important ways on tropes of blood and biology, encompasses complex dynamics that interweave the creation of kinship through both genealogical connection and cultural performance. This happens in ways that in practice actively blur the distinction between biology and culture, even if this distinction appears to be deployed with clarity. This has made tropes of biological kinship seem less deterministic and 'stern' than might be thought.

Kinship, hybridity, continuity and change

Strathern (1992, pp. 11–30) elaborates on the basic 'facts of kinship', speaking specifically of modern English kinship.² The first fact of kinship is that persons are individual, that is, different. The reproductive process means that the child comes from its parents, as relationships produce new individuals, but that it is not the same as its parents, as new individuals are set in opposition to the parental relationship. In the English view of kinship, as more children are produced, more individuation occurs. Children produce new, more diverse practices that are set against the apparently homogeneous tradition of their parents. More individuality equals more diversity. Indeed, 'diversity is the second fact of modern kinship' (Strathern 1992, p. 22). Reproduction is seen as inherently producing innovation and newness – whatever happens, the child enters the world as a new person. Yet, the child is unquestionably connected to its parents. It is, one might say, a 'changed same'. Strathern (1992, p. 14) notes that the apparent antithesis between conceptual constructs such as change and continuity may be seen as though they modelled a reproductive process: 'The child that comes from its parents is not its parents. That the child is not its parents provides an image for thinking about the contrast between tradition versus novelty, relationships versus individuals; that the child comes from its parents prompts a counterinterpretation. Tradition innovates; relationships produce individuals'.

Of course, concepts of change and continuity are central to theories of hybridity – the hybrid is related to what has gone before, but in unpredictable ways – and just as the reproductive process, as understood in Western kinship models, acts as a model for thinking about continuity and change, I argue that it does so for theorizing hybridity. Change and continuity, being and becoming, roots and routes, parents and children – these are all discursive pairs in which each 'depends on the other to demonstrate its effect' (Strathern

1992, p. 3). Just as all these pairs can be seen as competitors in a zero-sum game (more room for one leads to less room for the other), they can also be seen as in a relationship of mutual constitution (one cannot be thought without the other).

I think the complementarity of continuity and change is also reflected in ideas about heredity. Schneider (1980), describing American kinship, shows how a child is thought of as made up of equal contributions from both parents. Schneider does not elaborate on these ideas, but I argue that the process by which separate contributions combine may be thought of, on the one hand, in terms of a 'blending theory' of inheritance (Mayr 1982) in which each parent is assumed to provide a substance – typically 'blood' – which blends with the partner's substance, as does coffee with milk, in the new person, producing a mixture, a hybrid. The new person can pass on their parents' substances, but in diluted form. This theory works well for features such as skin colour, where the children of a dark-skinned parent and a light-skinned parent are generally intermediate in colour (although often in unpredictable ways). On the other hand, the process of combination may also be thought of in terms of a 'particulate' theory of inheritance, in which each parent provides a set of particles or traits (e.g. in contemporary terms, chromosomes, genes, DNA sequences – although none of these can easily be described as particles in biological terms) that are sorted and recombined in the new person, while still retaining their particularity. This way of thinking about inheritance works well for other kinds of traits which seem to recur in different generations without being substantially diluted: people will identify a 'grandfather's nose', a predisposition to a certain illness or perhaps particular personality traits.³ Working with both blending and particulate theories of inheritance, people see both continuity and change of the kind Strathern describes: children are both similar to and different from their parents in ways that are at once predictable and unpredictable and are cause of debate and pondering in families.

Again, there are parallels with the way that theories about hybridity grapple with change and newness, continuity and sameness. On the one hand, the idea of the cultural element that is re-located, re-appropriated and re-signified in a new context is common in ideas about hybridity. The element that is 'inherited' and looks familiar is given new meaning by appearing in relation to other perhaps unfamiliar elements; a musical element, for example, might be 'cut and mixed' into a new context, retaining familiarity but gaining new meanings. On the other hand, theorizations of hybridity also talk in terms of cultural patterns that are seemingly new, that do not look like anything that went before, but at the same time seem to draw some shape or feel from precursors: a new musical style might emerge that is perceived as new, but draws on previous styles and influences in diverse ways.

Kinship, hybridity, nature and culture

The material presented above speaks to my first argument about Western kinship models and the way biological processes of reproduction are thought of as combining roots, going back to previous generations and origins, and routes, going forward to unpredictable futures and recombinations. The second argument I want to make about Western kinship models focuses on the key role of cultural performance in creating kinship, in ways that can be unpredictable and innovative. Although tropes of blood and biology are key components of thinking about kin and non-kin, or distinguishing between blood kin and affinal kin or 'in-laws', there are also very important aspects of cultural performance which are involved in creating kin ties that are not just affinal. Kin are not just *born*, they are *made* (and not just through the usual means of marriage).⁴

Basing her ideas on a study of the town of Bacup in the UK, Edwards (2000, p. 28) argues that 'being biologically related to a person does not axiomatically make them kin. A claim of belonging (to persons and places) can be made through upbringing as much as birth. The juxtaposition of being born and bred allows for kinship to be conceptualized through both or either'. Edwards and Strathern develop this point, referring to the 'impasse set up by imagining kinship as divided between social and biological manifestations of itself'. They prefer to emphasize the 'interdigitation of diverse kinds of linkages' and 'the division and combination of social and biological facts' that are used in English kinship to reckon relatedness (Edwards & Strathern 2000, p. 150, p. 158, p. 159). Their research indicates that the 'amount of blood' that is thought to connect people 'may or may not be relevant to the strength of the connection' (original emphasis). They also note, however, that apparently 'social' traits may be subject to essentialization: birthplace and mother tongue may be seen as 'immutables not open to choice' in ways which 'echo the definitive transmission of substance at conception' (Edwards & Strathern 2000, p. 160, p. 161).

A further illustration of the flexibility and complexity of kin roots is Nash's work on the use of genealogical reckonings by people in the Irish diaspora. Nash argues that such reckonings and searches for ancestry may seem to be easily linked to ideas about cultural and national purity and essentialism, and to rooted identities legitimated by blood lines. However, genealogies also entail a more complex set of imaginings that reveal flows and migrations and that challenge a view of roots as a simple biological determination. Meetings between long-lost 'Irish' relatives, reunited through ancestry searches, revealed 'the limits of biological connection as a source of intimacy and affinity' (Nash 2002, p. 48). Genealogical reckoning was itself held in the complex tension between 'roots' and 'routes', in which roots are not simple belongings, but re-imaginings and re-narrations of belonging that co-exist

with the migrations and displacements of routes (Nash 2002, pp. 32–3). Roots were not just given but had to be made significant.

Work with adoptive families and gay and lesbian families shows the importance of actively becoming quasi-consanguineal kin through nurture, love and sociality, as well as simply being kin by virtue of a perceived ‘blood’ connection. In her work on adoption reunion narratives, Carsten found that British adults adopted as children who had sought out birth parents were very conscious of the powerful bonds, created through love and nurture, that linked them to their adoptive parents. She found that birth alone did not imply ‘certainty or endurance or solidarity’. She argues that ‘time itself [had] a key role in producing new meanings for kinship’ and concludes that we cannot perceive ‘a very sharp or consistent distinction between what ‘travels in the blood’ and what is absorbed from the environment’ (Carsten 2000, p. 691, p. 693). Weston (1991) contends that gay and lesbian families are a challenge to the whole idea of biology and procreative sexual intercourse as the foundation of kinship in the USA. In these families, more emphasis is put on nurturing and love in creating kinship. Hayden (1995) argues that lesbian mothers do employ notions of blood and biological links in creating families, for example in the way they value connections between a mother and her child by artificial insemination, or the siblingship of children born to two women in a lesbian relationship, using the same sperm donor. But in affirming ‘the importance of blood as a symbol’ in American kinship, these mothers also ‘challenge the American cultural assumption that biology is a self-evident singular fact and *the* natural baseline on which kinship is built’ (Hayden 1995, p. 56).

The key point is that kinship, as a trope about biological connectedness, is not necessarily about determinism and fixedness of relationship or identity. Kinship too can lend itself to imaginative reconstructions and elaborations, even when it retains the language of blood and biology. As Franklin says, some previous approaches in anthropology ‘ignored the extent to which biology, even in its traditional [i.e. pre-genomic] form, is about change’; recent approaches, such as those of Donna Haraway, have ‘captured a great deal more of [the] ambiguity in the biological’ (Franklin 2001, p. 320). Thus suggests that hybridity theorists need to rethink their ideas about kinship and biology as automatically tending towards essentialism and foundational identities (Wade 2002b).

Hybridity and kinship revisited

The kinship thinking that I argue parallels hybridity theory has room for both blending and particulate ideas of inheritance, seamless mix and collage. Hybridity theory also contains within it the tension between connections and

identities made through genealogical origins and those forged through practice, a tension that is exactly parallel to that between 'being born' and 'being bred' in English kinship reckoning and, more broadly, Western ways of thinking about personhood and relatedness.

Gilroy and others reject the notion of two neat, pure wholes coming together to produce a third element, and I agree that this is hopeless way of thinking about cultural dynamics of continuity and change. But then the Western models of kinship that I argue are imbricated with theories of hybridity are not about neat, pure wholes coming together: each parent is itself inherently a hybrid and each person is involved in complex webs of ties which are both given and made. Kinship relationships may be read as genealogical trees for some purposes, but they are also understood by people involved in them as endlessly ramifying, rhizomic networks. Just as cultural hybridizations may be read post hoc in selective ways to produce comforting teleologies (as Raymond Williams (1980) noted long ago in his concept of selective tradition), so kinship networks can be constructed to produce particular trees. In that sense, the tensions that afflict the concept of hybridity – does it simply reiterate notions of origin or can it invoke and even create radical heterogeneity? – are mirrored in the tensions of kinship: who is, and who is not, 'part of the family'?

An illustration of the kinship assumptions that underlie thinking about processes of mixture is furnished by the recent literature on mixed-race identities in the USA. Root argues that mixed-race people 'expose the irrationality by which the [racial] categories have been derived and enforced' (Root 1996a, p. xxv). This idea that the US system of racial reckoning is irrational is supported by Spickard who describes the 'illogic' of American racial categories. Part of his argument is that all racial categorizations are illogical because they do not accord with the facts of biology – which, as he recognizes, only makes the categories illogical if they pretend to be based on biology. But 'what is most illogical is that [in the USA] we imagine these racial categories to be exclusive' (Spickard 1992, p. 20). For example, one could only – until 1997 – check one census box for racial identity and this census practice broadly reflected social usage. To take the most common example, it is illogical to have to be *either black or white*, when so many people are black-white mixes. The US 'one-drop rule' that classifies anyone with 'one drop of black blood' as black is the mainstay of the either/or system – a system arguably now losing its dualist rigidity (Root 1996b, Azoulay 1997). This rule determines that 'a white woman can give birth to a Black child, but a Black woman can never give birth to a white child' (Nash 1995, p. 950, citing Barbara J. Fields). In one brutal sense, this system is highly logical: it defines a clear rule and follows it to a logical conclusion. In what sense, then, is it illogical, except insofar as any racial categorization is illogical? The intuition that the US system is illogical comes, I believe, from a sense of the 'logic' of a

Western cognatic kinship model that assumes that a child gets equal amounts of its constitution from both parents. This does not necessarily mean people think a child born to a 'black' parent and a 'white' parent is literally physically half black and half white – although this mode of thought may, indeed, be widespread, in view of the fact that people routinely talk of having, say, black or white 'blood' in their veins, or of being, say, a quarter West Indian or half Scottish.⁵ Whether or not the kinship logic is understood in physical terms, it can also simply supply a way of thinking about the allegiances and ties that such a child would have 'logically' (i.e. 'naturally' by the precepts of Western kinship reckoning). It is against the background of this assumption that the US system appears illogical.

What is the relationship between kinship thinking and hybridity thinking? I have purposely used metaphors that suggest both a parallel relationship, in which one mode of thinking is a structural homology of the other, and a more causal or archaeological relationship, in which kinship thinking underlies or is hidden within hybridity thinking. This ambiguity obeys a basic uncertainty that is inherently difficult to resolve because part of my argument is that hybridity thinking *is* kinship thinking, rather than that these are two separate modes of thought which can easily be put into a relationship of homology or causality. Perhaps the best approximation would be to say that in areas characterized by Western kinship practices – and I am fully aware of the difficulties of defining such areas – people, including cultural theorists, think about human social and cultural mixture in particular ways that, I argue, draw on ideas of inherited roots and on ideas of diversifying innovation and performative elaboration. These ideas are used to think about both human kinship and relatedness and about cultural mixtures and creations – these realms mutually inform each other and indeed may not be clearly distinguishable. Kinship relatedness and reproduction may act as 'a model' for thinking about cultural mixtures and developments, and the other way around.

As we saw above, Strathern has made similar arguments about kinship models and ideas of continuity and change, or tradition and innovation: 'The child that comes from its parents is not its parents. That the child is not its parents provides an image for thinking about the contrast between tradition versus novelty, relationships versus individuals; that the child comes from its parents prompts a counter-interpretation. Tradition innovates; relationships produce individuals' (Strathern 1992, p. 14). In a later paper, Strathern (2003) also argues for a parallel between scientific and Western kinship thinking. She observes that there is a tension in kinship models between kin defined as connected through 'real' biological links (which means one can discover kin one didn't know one had) and kin connected through 'real' but constructed sociality (which means one can make kinship through performance). This is paralleled by a tension in science between the idea that scientists discover already existing physical reality and the idea that they at least partially

construct the reality that they see. In Strathern's arguments, the precise relationship between these different domains of thought is not made explicit. As with my contention about hybridity theory and kinship thinking, the implication is that they mutually enable each other.

This argument about the imbrication of kinship and hybridity thinking begs the question of why cultural theorists – and perhaps others as well – tend to represent kinship as primarily a limited form of genealogical thinking that is only about primordial roots and is opposed to rhizomic cultural hybridity. I think this obeys the tendency Latour (1993, pp. 10–12) notes among 'modern' people to attempt to maintain clear conceptual modernist divides between realms called nature and culture, despite the fact that these realms are constantly hybridized in practice. As Strathern (1996, p. 522) has summarized Latour's argument: 'Moderns divide society from technology, culture from nature, human from nonhuman, except that they do not – Euro-American moderns are like anyone else in the hybrids they make, even though they are rarely as explicit. [...] The divides of modern people's thinking do not correspond to the methods they deploy'. So although at one level – and perhaps this is especially so in the realm of cultural analysis – clear distinctions are maintained between 'natural' roots and 'cultural' routes, at another level of practical thinking and thoughtful practice such distinctions are blurred.

Another reason why kinship and biology get a bad name in hybridity theories may have to do with the role that racial and national identities play in such debates. When it comes to race, in particular, references to blood and biology are viewed – not without good reason – with suspicion and may be seen as antithetical to attempts to construct anti-essentialist or post-racial futures. However, I think this prejudices the way in which kinship and biology work in people's reckonings of identity and, as argued above, these may both be more flexible than is supposed – even when it comes to reckoning racial identities (Wade 2002b).

On the other hand, it is more than just a passing coincidence that theories about rhizomic hybridity have gained ground at a time when Western notions of kinship, and indeed nature itself, have been reshaped by biotechnology in an age of recombinant genetics (Strathern 1992, Haraway 1997, Braun & Castree 1998, Franklin 2000, Franklin & McKinnon 2001). In such an age, the notion of parenthood becomes fragmented (e.g. into genetic, gestational and social motherhood) and, while increased emphasis may be laid on the importance of a genetic link, this is also because the significance of this link and its perceived entailments, and the possibility of alternatives to it (gestational ties, social ties), have become foregrounded too. Strathern (1992, p. 183) contends that nowadays 'persons can be imagined as simply composed of elements of other persons – whether in terms of organ transplants, or the borrowing of cultural forms or the imitation of individual lifestyles, or even the transmission of genetic particles. We move from the unique amalgam of elements drawn from

different domains to a literal assemblage of parts perceived as substitutable or replaceable for one another'. This seems to link neatly with ideas of diasporic cut-and-mix and collage deployed by recent theories of hybridity. I am suggesting that, while 'traditional' kinship models already had a place for the idea of endless proliferation of networks in structures of predictable unpredictability, the kinship thinking that emerges with the fragmentation of traditional models by new biotechnologies strongly parallels the interest in rhizomic hybridity that has emerged in the last decades.

At the same time, analysts of the recent destabilization of nature point to the ambiguous effects of this process (Van Dijck 1998, Condit 1999, Franklin 2000, 2001, Brodwin 2002, Wade 2002b). On the one hand, ideas about origins become open to 'geneticization' and genetic essentialism (which reckons identity through determinist and unilinear genetic genealogies). On the other hand, the possible meanings of a genetic link proliferate and become less secure as the complexity and open-endedness of genetic connections – and the possibility of their manipulation with technology – become apparent and the supposed determinism of 'the gene' is put into question. Recent work on changing concepts of nature and genetics also indicates that established categories and distinctions (of kinship, race, gender, etc.) are not erased: they are instead 'vigorously reinstated', according to Van Dijck (1998, p. 194), while Franklin (2000, p. 217) sees new technologies as both drawing on and displacing pre-existing beliefs about nature. According to Van Dijck (1998, p. 194): 'New concepts of flexibility and fluidity cannot exist without prior notions of fixity'. In that sense, the tension between roots and routes that is characteristic of hybridity theory and kinship thinking is played out again in kinship in an age of genomics and assisted reproduction technologies. Anxiety emerges around the potential for greater genetic essentialism at the same time as naturalizing and geneticizing discourses increasingly blur into culturalizing discourses – due to that fact that 'nature' looks more and more like 'culture', that is, malleable, constructed and contingent (Rabinow 1992, Franklin 2000). This helps explain why ideas of the positive value of rhizomic hybridity gain ground, while at the same time genealogical hybridity is cast as a potentially dangerous, essentializing process. This ambivalent evaluation may be more to do with recent changes in the way nature is perceived in a genomic age than it is to do with the supposed 'mantle' of nineteenth-century raciological biology that Young (1995, p. 25) says still haunts rhizomic theories of hybridity.

The future of hybridity theory

If metaphors of kinship are evident in hybridity theory and kinship thinking parallels hybridity thinking, what are implications of this? Why does it matter?

It is commonly assumed that an emphasis on genealogical roots leads to essentialist and exclusive identities, generally seen as negative, although special cases of 'strategic essentialism' may be seen as historically justifiable. In contrast, an emphasis on diasporic, rhizomic routes is said to undo essentialism and exclusivism. This view needs to be nuanced in two ways.

First, the widespread assumption that essentialism is necessarily exclusivist (at least perniciously so) needs to be re-examined. Werbner (1997a, p. 229) makes a distinction between essentialism as 'objectification', a positive type of collective self-identification, and essentialism as 'reification' that silences difference and legitimates violence. Anthropologists and others have had recurrent difficulties with how to relate to social movements, the motives and goals of which they approve, but which nevertheless seem to deal in essentialist definitions of identity (Wade 1997, pp. 116–17, Warren 1998). Friedman (1997) is scathing about the 'cosmopolitan' elite disapproval of essentialist indigenous identities, when global economic and political realities are encouraging the less privileged to indigenize, ethnicize and establish defensive boundaries. He argues there is nothing wrong with this, unless such reactions lead to racism. However, none of this changes the very common idea that essentialism as such is exclusivist. It may be logical and justifiable in certain circumstances, but the very notion of strategic essentialism suggests that essentialism itself is not a positive thing and only when it is qualified as strategic can it be accepted.

One way round this problem is to recognize that essentialist definitions of identity may be less exclusivist in practice than they appear. An emphasis on genealogical roots as the basis for an essentialist definition, for example, can be flexible, as I have argued above. Another example comes from Colombia where, in 1993, legislation was enacted allowing some 'black communities' to claim rural land titles (Wade 2002a). The legal definition of black community was essentialist in many ways, focusing on ancestral roots and traditional territories, and the process of claiming titles often involved urban literate Afrocolombian activists going to rural communities to instruct them in their history and identity. However, Hoffmann argues that, in practice, essentialist definitions were made flexible and inclusive as local people tried to solve immediate problems: in one case, an indigenous person was classified by locals as part of their 'black community' (Hoffmann 2002). Stoler is unusual in recognizing that the 'notion of essence does not necessarily rest on immovable parts but on the strategic inclusion of different attributes, of a changing constellation of features and a changing weighting of them' (Stoler 1997, p. 200). She was thinking of this in terms of shifting regimes of exclusion and discrimination, but if it is true about exclusion, it is presumably also true about inclusion. Essentialism is a movable feast.

From this perspective, the problem becomes not so much one of whether to build identities and cultural politics around either rootedness or diasporas,

either essentialist or non-essentialist definitions, as one of *which* roots and routes get included and excluded in practice in any given case, what meanings are given to them and what the political effects of this are. One question, for example, would be the extent to which it is *made explicit* that, as Hall says, the past is being re-experienced through the categories of the present (bearing in mind that, ontologically, we have no choice but to experience the past through the present). Are the old meanings simply reproduced, or are they consciously resignified? What effects of inclusion and exclusion are generated in the process? It is not necessarily the case that a diaspora experience of hybridizations will lead people to be explicit about the way the past is re-experienced through the categories of the present, or to avoid discrimination. It may encourage an emphasis on timeless origins and exclusive identities.

Second, my argument suggests that roots, kinship and biology are not necessarily linked to essentialism. While genealogical kinship thinking can be and is used to create and underwrite exclusivist essentialisms and while reckonings by 'blood' can be used to create highly discriminatory racial systems and to underwrite ethnic-nationalist violence (Alonso 1994), genealogical reckoning and kinship thinking in general can be much more flexible than this, as I have tried to show. Hall recognizes this in some sense by arguing, as we have seen, that roots can co-exist with a diasporic experience, but as roots 're-experienced through the categories of the present' and thus open to complex mediations. But roots can still get a bad press, especially when they are reckoned through notions of kinship, blood and biology, as opposed to the kind of historical, cultural roots that Hall had in mind. The lesson is, then, that when we encounter tropes of kinship, biology and, more widely, nature used in the reckoning of identities and boundaries, we need to look at see what effects these tropes have in practice, rather than assuming that they will necessarily be negative.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the following for having read and commented on draft versions of this paper: Jon Beasley-Murray, Susan Brook, Catherine Nash, Patience Schell and Natalie Zacek. Thanks also to the *Cultural Studies* anonymous referee.

Notes

- 1 Young cites a phrase used by the nineteenth-century German anatomist, Carl Vogt, to refer to the Anglo-Saxons who were, in his view, a 'mongrel race' and yet at the same time a 'raceless chaos' in whom miscegenation had led to a chaotic indistinction 'without any fixed type' (cited in Young 1995, p. 17).

- 2 Strathern refers to English kinship between roughly the 1860s and 1960s, but she adds that 'the late twentieth century contains as much as it supersedes of this earlier modernism' (1992, p. 11).
- 3 For material on lay theories of inheritance in the UK, see Davison (1997), Edwards (2000) and Richards (1997).
- 4 The blurring of boundaries between nature and culture is a theme I explore at length in a recent book (Wade 2002b).
- 5 On blood quanta and the fractionalizing calculus of racial identity in the USA, see Mengel (2001) and Wilson (1992). For a discussion of blood as a trope in talking about race, see Wade (2002b, pp. 97–111).

References

- Alonso, A. M. (1994) 'The politics of space, time and substance: state formation, nationalism, and ethnicity', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 23, pp. 379–405.
- Anzaldúa, G. (1987) *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Aunt Lute Books, San Francisco.
- Azoulay, K. G. (1997) *Black, Jewish and Interracial: It's Not the Color of Your Skin, But the Race of Your Kin, and Other Myths of Identity*, Duke University Press, Durham.
- Bhabha, H. (1994) *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London.
- Brah, A. (1996) *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, Routledge, London.
- Braun, B. & Castree, N., eds (1998). *Remaking Reality: Nature at the Millennium*, Routledge, London.
- Brodwin, P. (2002) 'Genetics, identity and the anthropology of essentialism', *Anthropological Quarterly*, vol. 75, no. 2, pp. 323–330.
- Carsten, J. (2000) "'Knowing where you've come from": ruptures and continuities of time and kinship in narratives of adoption reunions', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 687–703.
- Condit, C. M. (1999) *The Meanings of the Gene: Public Debates about Human Heredity*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.
- Davison, C. (1997) 'Everyday ideas of inheritance and health in Britain', in *Culture, Kinship and Genes: Towards Cross-Cultural Genetics*, eds A. Clarke & E. Parsons, Macmillan and St. Martin's Press, London and New York, pp. 167–174.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1988) *A Thousand Plateaus*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Edwards, J. (2000) *Born and Bred: Idioms of Kinship and New Reproductive Technologies in England*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Edwards, J. & Strathern, M. (2000) 'Including our own', in *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*, ed. J. Carsten, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 149–166.
- Franklin, S. (2000) 'Life itself: global nature and the genetic imaginary', in *Global Nature, Global Culture*, eds S. Franklin, C. Lury & J. Stacey, Sage, London, pp. 188–227.

- Franklin, S. (2001) 'Biologization revisited: kinship theory in the context of the new biologies', in *Relative Values: Reconfiguring Kinship Studies*, eds S. Franklin & S. McKinnon, Duke University Press, Durham, pp. 303–325.
- Franklin, S. & McKinnon, S., eds (2001). *Relative Values: Reconfiguring Kinship Studies*, Duke University Press, Durham.
- Friedman, J. (1997) 'Global crises, the struggle for cultural identity and intellectual porkbarrelling: cosmopolitans versus locals, ethnics and nationals in an era of de-hegemonisation', in *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, eds P. Werbner & T. Modood, Zed Books, London, pp. 70–89.
- García Canclini, N. (1995) *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Translated by C. L. Chiappari & S. L. López, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Gilroy, P. (1993) *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Verso, London.
- Gilroy, P. (2000) *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race*, Penguin Books, London.
- Hale, C. R. (1996) 'Mestizaje, hybridity and the cultural politics of difference in post-revolutionary Central America', *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 34–61.
- Hale, C. R. (1999) 'Travel warning: elite appropriations of hybridity, mestizaje, antiracism, equality, and other progressive-sounding discourses in highland Guatemala', *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 112, no. 445, pp. 297–315.
- Hall, S. (1996) 'New ethnicities', in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds D. Morley & K.-H. Chen, Routledge, London, pp. 441–449.
- Haraway, D. (1997) *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan©_Meets_Onco mouse™*, Routledge, London.
- Hayden, C. P. (1995) 'Gender, genetics and generation: reformulating biology in lesbian kinship', *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 41–63.
- Hoffmann, O. (2002) 'Collective memory and ethnic identities in the Colombian Pacific', *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 118–138.
- Hutnyk, J. (1997) 'Adorno at Womad: South Asian crossovers and the limits of hybridity-talk', in *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, eds P. Werbner & T. Modood, Zed Books, London, pp. 106–136.
- Ifekwunigwe, J. O. (1999) *Scattered Belongings: Cultural Paradoxes of 'Race', Nation and Gender*, Routledge, London.
- Kapchan, D. A. & Strong, P. T. (1999) 'Theorizing the hybrid', *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 112, no. 445, pp. 239–253.
- Kureishi, H. (1990) *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Faber and Faber, London.
- Latour, B. (1993) *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. C. Porter, Harvester Wheatsheaf, London.
- Mayr, E. (1982) *The Growth of Biological Thought: Diversity, Evolution and Inheritance*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

- Mengel, L. M. (2001) 'Triples – the social evolution of a multiracial panethnicity: an Asian American perspective', in *Rethinking 'Mixed Race'*, eds D. Parker & M. Song, Pluto Press, London, pp. 99–116.
- Nash, C. (2002) 'Genealogical identities', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 20, pp. 27–52.
- Nash, G. (1995) 'The hidden history of mestizo America', *Journal of American History*, vol. 82, no. 3, pp. 941–964.
- Nelson, D. M. (1999) 'Perpetual creation and decomposition: bodies, gender, and desire in the assumptions of a Guatemalan discourse of mestizaje', *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 74–111.
- Papastergiadis, N. (1997) 'Tracing hybridity in theory', in *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, eds P. Werbner & T. Modood, Zed Books, London, pp. 257–281.
- Rabinow, P. (1992) 'Artificiality and the enlightenment: from sociobiology to biosociality', in *Incorporations*, eds J. Crary & S. Kwinter, Zone Books, New York, pp. 234–9252.
- Richards, M. (1997) 'It runs in the family: lay knowledge about inheritance', in *Culture, Kinship and Genes: Towards Cross-Cultural Genetics*, eds A. Clarke & E. Parsons, Macmillan and St. Martin's Press, London and New York, pp. 175–194.
- Root, M. P. P. (1996a) 'The multiracial experience: racial borders as a significant frontier in race relations', in *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier*, ed. M. P. P. Root, Sage, Thousand Oaks, pp. xiii–9xxviii.
- Root, M. P. P., ed. (1996b). *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier*, Sage, Thousand Oaks.
- Schneider, D. (1980) *American Kinship: A Cultural Account*, 2nd edn, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Smith, C. A. (1997) 'The symbolics of blood: mestizaje in the Americas', *Identities*, vol. 3, no. 4, pp. 495–521.
- Spickard, P. (1992) 'The illogic of American racial categories', in *Racially Mixed People in America*, ed. M. P. P. Root, Sage, London, pp. 12–23.
- Stoler, A. L. (1997) 'Racial histories and their regimes of truth', *Political Power and Social Theory*, vol. 11, pp. 183–220.
- Strathern, M. (1992) *After Nature: English Kinship in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Strathern, M. (2003) Living science. Paper read at Anthropology and Science: The 5th Decennial Conference of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth, 14–18 July, Manchester, UK.
- Van Dijck, J. (1998) *Imagenation: Popular Images of Genes*, Macmillan, London.
- Wade, P. (1997) *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America*, Pluto Press, London.
- Wade, P. (2002a) 'The Colombian Pacific in perspective', *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 2–33.
- Wade, P. (2002b) *Race, Nature and Culture: An Anthropological Perspective*, Pluto Press, London.

- Warren, K. B. (1998) *Indigenous Movements and Their Critics: Pan-Maya Activism in Guatemala*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Werbner, P. (1997a) 'Essentialising essentialism: ambivalence and multiplicity in the constructions of racism and ethnicity', in *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, eds P. Werbner & T. Modood, Zed Books, London, pp. 226–254.
- Werbner, P. (1997b) 'Introduction: the dialectics of cultural hybridity', in *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, eds P. Werbner & T. Modood, Zed Books, London, pp. 1–26.
- Werbner, P. & Modood, T., eds (1997). *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, Zed Books, London.
- Weston, K. (1991) *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Williams, R. (1980) *Problems in Materialism and Culture*, Verso, London.
- Wilson, T. P. (1992) 'Blood quantum: Native American mixed bloods', in *Racially Mixed People in America*, ed. M. P. P. Root, pp. 108–125.
- Young, R. (1995) *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, Routledge, London.