

4 Towards the Conceptualization of an Analytical Tool

“Hybridity” and “hybridization” are terms which lack the ability to differentiate, because the concept of hybridity does not provide a language that describes division and distinction. As such, the multifaceted modalities of “hybridities” cannot be grasped using the conceptual vocabulary associated with the term itself.⁸² As I argued above, the notions of “hybridity” and “hybridization” are rather figures of thought, non-concepts which aim at triggering a thinking that goes “beyond.” Accordingly, they are not conceptualized as analytical tools. In this chapter, I will propose a systematization of “hybridization” and will develop an analytical tool which allows for the identification of “hybridization” on the textual level. Discussing Berner’s proposal for a systematization of syncretism provides us with a vocabulary that allows “traces of hybridization” to be examined on the textual level. In the following, I will begin by discussing a proposal for the operationalization of “hybridity.” This discussion will illustrate the pitfalls and difficulties involved in such a project, while at the same time helping to concretize the concept of “hybridization.” In this context, Bhabha’s ideas on “translation,” the “third space,” and “mimicry” will also be discussed. As a result, a vocabulary will emerge that will enable us to differentiate between two levels: the textual level, on which “traces of hybridization” can be identified, and the level of “hybridization” itself. The final section considers a proposal to operationalize the global history approach, and in doing so provides the foundation on which “encounters” are conceptualized as preconditions for “hybridization.”

4.1 What are the Pitfalls? A Proposal for Operationalizing “Hybridization”

Steven Yao⁸³ has discussed “hybridization” in connection with Asian American writers and their literary production.⁸⁴ Following Yao’s line of argument will, on the one hand, provide insights into a variety of aspects of “hybridization” and will show one way in which “hybridization” can be operationalized. On the other hand, it will also become apparent that his approach has several disadvantages

⁸² Shohat, “Notes on the ‘Post-Colonial’,” 110.

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⁸⁴ Steven Yao, “Taxonomizing Hybridity,” *Textual Practice* 17, no. 2 (2003): 361.

which it will be necessary to address if “hybridity” is to be operationalized as a meaningful concept in this book.

In his article, Yao proposes, “a new ‘taxonomy’ of hybridization strategies that at once explicitly acknowledges and, more importantly, builds upon the ineluctably biologicistic foundations of the concept of ‘hybridity’.”⁸⁵ Yao’s proposal has the benefit of describing a field of modes of “hybridization.”⁸⁶ He attempts to identify “different *degrees* of synthesis or interaction between various traditions and expressive resources”⁸⁷ as “modes” or “types” of “hybridization.” This goal is inherently problematic, since the introduction of degrees of “hybridization” implies a hierarchization of different modes of “hybridization.” What Yao’s model demonstrates is that a) “hybridity” and “hybridization” are general terms which b) can – and must be – concretized and adapted to particular cases. It illustrates c) that it is difficult to find a set of terms which would describe “all” modes of “hybridization,” and d) that terms are not suitable for use in connection with “hybridity” if they either deny power-relations or claim that no alterations of the “foreign cultural element”⁸⁸ and the target system take place in the transfer. An immense disadvantage of Yao’s approach is his use of biological and medical terms as categories of “hybridization.” Not only is the biological and racist background of “hybridity” the source of one of the strongest critiques that can be laid against it, but the use of such language also suggests that cultural entanglements can be framed in biological or evolutionist terms.⁸⁹ The biologizing language of “hybridization” makes it difficult to overcome the metaphorical implications of pureness and mixedness. Bhabha claims that his idea of “hybridization” is not rooted in the logic of dialectical evolution as he attempts to avoid the introduction of any teleological elements.⁹⁰ It will be seen below that this is one of the most difficult points to be addressed in the operationalization of “hybridization,” because many terms are inherently teleological in their implications.⁹¹

85 Yao, “Taxonomizing Hybridity,” 363.

86 Yao, “Taxonomizing Hybridity,” 363–74.

87 Yao, “Taxonomizing Hybridity,” 374.

88 Yao, “Taxonomizing Hybridity,” 374.

89 Cf. Young, *Colonial Desire*.

90 Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders,” 162.

91 This was long understood by numerous scholars. Therefore not only in “postcolonial studies” (e.g. Arif Dirlik, “The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism,” *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 2 (1994): 334) but also in “global” or “entangled history” (e.g. Conrad and Eckert, “Globalgeschichte, Globalisierung, multiple Modernen,” 7) is the overcoming of these “teleologies” demanded.

Yao attempts to provide terms which conceptualize processes of “hybridization” in toto, but his approach has very significant limitations. There is, then, still a need to find a set of terms that can be used to describe the modalities of “hybridization” while also identifying different parts of the processes. As we will see below, Ulrich Berner has proposed just such a conceptual framework for identifying and discussing differentiation in relation to *Synkretismus*. The notion of syncretism has frequently been identified as closely related to “hybridity”⁹² and Berner’s proposal thus provides a very useful starting point for the systematization of “hybridization.”

4.2 A Proposal for the Operationalization of a Neighboring Term

Referring to Luhmann’s work in *Religion und System*, Berner introduces a distinction between “System” and “Element” on the basis of which he then proposes a systematic terminology for “syncretism.”⁹³ Berner’s systematization of this concept of syncretism provides several important insights that can be adapted for the operationalization of “hybridization.” Berner’s systematization provides a meticulously detailed instrument for the analysis of processes of cross- and intra-religious encounters. The level of detail in his framework helps the reader to conceptualize and make intelligible the dynamics of these encounters. However, an important problematic feature of his approach is that it suggests that these dynamics can be described in a conclusive manner. I argue that, while a detailed description helps to show the heterogeneity of these encounters, and therefore provides a helpful extension of Bhabha’s concept of hybridity, describing these processes of “hybridization” using a detailed terminology does not amount to the provision of a full description of the processes. Rather, we must be satisfied with a model of how these processes *might* work in specific cases.

⁹² Hall already put “syncretism” and “hybridity” in a neighbouring relation together with several other terms. Hall, “Wann gab es »das Postkoloniale«?,” 210–11. Similarly Shohat, “Notes on the ‘Post-Colonial’,” 108.

⁹³ Ulrich Berner, *Untersuchungen zur Verwendung des Synkretismus-Begriffs*, Göttinger Orientforschungen 2 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1982), 83.

4.2.1 Difficulties in and Demarcations from this Proposal

Although Berner claims that his work is not based on value judgements,⁹⁴ his whole systematization is a hierarchization of processes. He postulates that “every researcher has to evaluate the respective phenomena for themselves.”⁹⁵ This claim can be read as setting out a program of Eurocentrism and essentialism. From this perspective, several of Berner’s categories seem to be a) closely linked to a hierarchical and evolutionist value system, and b) often overdetermined and oversimplified. This is especially true when he introduces categories such as “evolution” on the systems level as irreversible process of (divine) creation.⁹⁶ This understanding of evolution indicates both a valuation and a (Hegelian-evolutionary) teleology. This is the background to Berner’s approach and it must be taken into account when drawing on his categorization.

Berner maintains that his terminology is not a “theory of syncretism” but a tool with “heuristic value” and that it therefore has to be useful, rather than being constrained by the demand that it be “theoretically sound” and “correct.”⁹⁷ Although I think such instruments should be both, the idea of *usefulness* is an interesting notion for the purposes of this book because it allows for the readjustment of a tool if it does not prove to be *useful*. The operationalization of “hybridization” should be *useful* and, hopefully, of “heuristic value.” If we understand Berner’s systematization of “syncretism” as such an *Instrumentarium* while at the same time dismissing his claims concerning the universality and the overarching explanatory value of his concept,⁹⁸ then it can be used in

94 “Die Gegenüberstellung von ‚Synkretismus‘, ‚Synthese‘ und ‚Pseudo-Synthese‘ (oder ‚Meta-Synkretismus‘) ist nicht mit Wertungen verbunden.” Berner, *Untersuchungen zur Verwendung des Synkretismus-Begriffs*, 88.

95 “Die Wertung der betreffenden Elemente und damit des ganzen Phänomens dem einzelnen Forscher überlassen [bleibt].” Berner, *Untersuchungen zur Verwendung des Synkretismus-Begriffs*, 88.

96 In his words: “‚Evolution‘ bezeichnet einen systeminternen irreversiblen und schöpferischen Prozeß, in dem neue Elemente entstehen, die dann als Zentrum eines neuen Systems fungieren.” Berner, *Untersuchungen zur Verwendung des Synkretismus-Begriffs*, 98. Two words stand out in this definition: 1) schöpferisch and 2) irreversibel. The first term can be translated as “creative,” with a strong Christian-religious connotation. The second refers to the notion of the total irreversible completeness of the process of alteration.

97 “Muß [es] sich in der Anwendung bewähren – nicht als ‚wahr‘, sondern als brauchbar.” Berner, *Untersuchungen zur Verwendung des Synkretismus-Begriffs*, 108.

98 Berner, *Untersuchungen zur Verwendung des Synkretismus-Begriffs*, XII Berner, *Untersuchungen zur Verwendung des Synkretismus-Begriffs*, XII, 88–110.

an eclectic way as a) a blueprint for systematization and b) a resource for *useful* categories that are able to describe parts of the “hybridization” processes.

4.2.2 A Selection of *Useful* Categories

Berner’s category of “Relationierung” is most instructive. I claim that ideas about the relationships between systems (macro-macro, meso-meso, micro-micro, macro-meso, macro-micro, meso-micro) as well as between their elements can be helpful tools in describing the metaprocess of “hybridization.” Thinking of relations as traces of “stairwells” and “in-betweens” will provide interesting insights (see below) which can then fruitfully be combined with the global history approach (see Chapter 4.4).

Berner identifies three broad categories within his notion of “Relationierung”: a) harmonizing relationizing; b) hierarchical relationizing; and c) distancing. For Berner, a) takes the form of approaches that aim to solve the competition between two systems while maintaining the boundaries between them. By contrast, b) captures the relationizing process by which several systems are brought into hierarchical relationships with each other. Berner distinguishes several categories of hierarchization. 1) Evaluating hierarchization, the creation of a hierarchy in which different systems are separated in terms of the values attributed to them. 2) Epistemological hierarchization, which involves a hierarchy based on levels of insight into “truth.” 3) Chronological hierarchization, based on claims about the temporal validity of systems, according to which one system might be valid for an earlier period of time whereas another might be valid for a later period. 4) Genealogical hierarchization involves a hierarchy based on claims of genealogical dependencies. Finally, 5) inclusive hierarchization, which involves a system making an inclusivist claim to encompass other competing systems. Returning now to the three broad categories, the third, c) distancing hierarchization, involves seeing systems as demarcated from one another in such a way that the demarcation of one system denies the validity of other systems.⁹⁹

Relationizing on the level of the elements within systems is described by Berner as a process in which several elements are brought into a relationship with one another without eliminating the boundaries between them. Although his systematization of relationizing at the element level could be useful in describing “hybridization” processes for other examples – e.g. the tecnomorph model with which he describes the well-known metaphor of the potter and the

⁹⁹ Berner, *Untersuchungen zur Verwendung des Synkretismus-Begriffs*, 98–101.

pot – it cannot be applied to the material analyzed in the present book.¹⁰⁰ Instead, I extend his idea of relationizing, especially in its hierarchizing form, to the element level.

Berner’s work is an insightful attempt to develop an analytical tool for use in textual analyses. What is especially interesting is that he provides a detailed *Instrumentarium* with which different modalities of encounters can be described. For the following, the differentiation between structures and elements will help us to conceptualize “hybridization” because this distinction allows the identification of structurally analogous processes or/and elements of knowledge or narratives which were transferred from one space to another.

The following chart summarizes the distinctions discussed above. “Relationizings” are indications of new and altered relations that were established in hybridization processes. These can be followed on the textual level.

The systematization of “hybridity” will be enriched in what follows by a reevaluation of Bhabha’s definitions of “hybridity” and by the introduction of two further concepts from Bhabha’s work: “third space” and “translation.”

Table 1: Relationizing. By the author.

Relationizing					
Distancing	Hierarchical				
	Evaluating	Epistemological	Chronological	Genealogical	Inclusive
Harmonizing					

4.3 “Hybridity” and “Hybridization” in Bhabha’s Theory: A Reevaluation and Augmentation

In the treatment of Bhabha’s concepts in the preceding chapter, I discussed the idea of “mimicry” as a “strategy” of “hybridization.” In the present chapter, “translation” will be discussed as another such strategy. Similarly, while the last chapter laid out Bhabha’s views on the “in-between” as the “space” in which meaning can be produced, here we will turn to Bhabha’s famous “third space” as another spatial metaphor he introduces to describe his concept of “hybridity.” These new concepts will sharpen the presentation of Bhabha’s theory and enlarge the terminology available for the operationalization of his concept.

¹⁰⁰ Berner, *Untersuchungen zur Verwendung des Synkretismus-Begriffs*, 101–8.

4.3.1 Processes of Hybridization: Translation and Mimicry

In *Signs Taken for Wonders*, Bhabha analyzes a scene described in a missionary report by Anund Messeh, one of the first Indian catechists. The report describes a gathering of a group of about five hundred native Indians around a tree outside Delhi. When Messeh arrived at the tree, he asked those present what they were doing. They informed him that they were reading the Bible in a Hindi translation, which they claimed to have received from an angel. Based on an in-depth analysis of the situation and dialogues described by Messeh, Bhabha develops and elaborates his conceptualization of “hybridization.” Central to his argument is the act of “repetition” in the colonial setting, in which the “signifier[s] of authority”¹⁰¹ are appropriated by the colonized. In this act of “repetition” “an image can neither be ‘original’ – by virtue of the act of repetition that constructs it – nor ‘identical’ – by virtue of the difference that defines it.”¹⁰² He argues that the colonial discourse is disrupted by the statement that “these books [. . .] teach the religion of the European Sahibs. It is THEIR book; and they printed it in our language, for our use.”¹⁰³ He clarifies that “our use” here implies exactly that “repetition” which estranges the “original.” The idea of repetition in Bhabha’s work is based on Derrida’s thought on “iteration.”¹⁰⁴ This split between “original” and its “repetition” is especially instructive in the case of translation, as Bhabha understands it. The possibility of a “repeat” is constitutive of something being the “original” in the first place, and its “originality” is thus dependent on the possibility of that same “repetition” which paradoxically at the same time negates its character of “originality.” This double-sided connection between “original” and “repetition” illustrates well how Bhabha conceptualizes the colonial discourse. In sum, if identity could be totalized, or, to put it another way, if and only if identity could be non-referential, it would resist the possibility of “repetition” because it would be impossible to “make sense” of it. At the same time, in this process of “repetition” the act of “making sense” of any “original identity” becomes altered through to an act of recontextualization.

As explained earlier in connection with “mimicry,” these sites of “hybridization” are the “spaces” in which Bhabha locates the agency of the colonized. In the process of translation, this agency comes to the fore in the appropriation of the language of “the other,” or, to phrase it in another way, in the process of translating elements and structures of one linguistic system into another. These

¹⁰¹ Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders,” 153.

¹⁰² Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders,” 153.

¹⁰³ As quoted in Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders,” 170.

¹⁰⁴ Huddart, *Homi K. Bhabha*, 16; Derrida, “Signatur Ereignis Kontext,” 298.

practices include a transformation of every element (and structure) involved in the process.¹⁰⁵ By translation, “otherness” is imported directly into the center of “culture” and can therefore be read as the paradigmatic example of “hybridization.”¹⁰⁶ Translation is further understood by Bhabha as a site of negotiation which emphasizes the connectedness between the “original” and the “repetition” that is inescapably established in their relation. This connectedness also has an important impact on the possibility of resisting the colonial discourse because it maintains the “historical connectedness between the subject and object of critique.”¹⁰⁷ To sum up, translation is understood by Bhabha as a process in which every element and structure that is involved is repeated with a difference. The “original” and its “translation” constitute each other in the process of translation. This connection is the reason why Bhabha understands translation as a process that directly inscribes otherness into the center of a discourse. And by inscribing otherness in this way, translation simultaneously disturbs the discourse.

4.3.2 In-Between and Third Space

Whereas the “in-between” describes the connection between the “self” and the “other,” it is also discussed by Bhabha as a fundamental relation between the “original” and its “copy” in connection to translation. The “third space” describes the creative space in which the agency of the colonized comes into play. Based on the poststructuralist claim that language separates the speaker from the spoken and from the object spoken of, both temporally and spatially – again one can read Derrida¹⁰⁸ through Bhabha’s work – Bhabha maintains that,

the production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot ‘in itself’ be conscious.¹⁰⁹

The “Third Space” is the “space” in which meaning is constituted in the interplay between language, referee, reference, and the addressed. Importantly, this space is connected to the act of speaking, in the sense that it is always performative

105 Struve, *Zur Aktualität von Homi K. Bhabha*, 131.

106 Struve, *Zur Aktualität von Homi K. Bhabha*, 132.

107 Bhabha, “The Commitment to Theory,” 38.

108 This separation of “text” and its “producer” is discussed by Derrida as “absence.” Derrida, “Signatur Ereignis Kontext,” 297.

109 Bhabha, “The Commitment to Theory,” 53.

and remains unconscious. “Meaning” is therefore always produced in a performative act. From this it follows that “context” and “content” do not have any fixed relation to each other. Bhabha’s “Third Space” can be read as a metaphor for this “production of meaning” in the performative act. The problem with this metaphor is that “space” usually refers to a relatively stable entity, while Bhabha tries to describe a moment of creativity and fluidity which is always *in medias res*. In his words:

It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew.¹¹⁰

It is in this process of performative creativity – described by Bhabha as the “Third Space” because it bridges spatial and temporal discontinuities – that agency takes *place*.¹¹¹ The (non-)concept of the “Third Space” is yet another figure of thought for Bhabha that serves as a strategy for overcoming ideas of enclosed entities which are not in contact with each other.

Read as a metaphor for the complexity of meaning production, “Third Space” is less valuable as an analytical tool because it is “unrepresentable in itself.” Rather, it functions as a canvas on which can be drawn a conceptualization of “hybridity” as an analytical tool that tries to follow the traces of “hybridization” in texts. The “Third Space” points towards a pivotal differentiation. The level of the “Third Space,” the “in-betweens,” and the “relations” must be differentiated from the textual level, the level of the “traces of hybridization.” In the next section, I will summarize those of Bhabha’s ideas that have been discussed in the context of the operationalization of “hybridization.” This provides the foundation on which a systematization of hybridity will be advanced as an analytical tool in Section 4.6.

4.3.3 A Second Summary

Hybridization is the general term for processes in which “hybridity” emerges. A key difficulty in this concept is that that which “becomes” “hybrid” was necessarily already “hybrid.” To say that something is more “hybrid” or less “hybrid” would hierarchize hybridities and thus imply a teleology. To avoid this outcome, hybridities should not be categorized on the basis of degrees of “hybridity.”

¹¹⁰ Bhabha, “The Commitment to Theory,” 55.

¹¹¹ Bhabha, “The Commitment to Theory,” 56.

Mimicry and translation are specific processes of “hybridization.” However, as I argue, they are only two possibilities among a huge range of modes of “hybridization.” “Hybridization” takes place in the “Third space,” which I understand as the “moment” of meaning production in the process of “hybridization.” It is the “space” where the “in-betweens” establish “meaning” in the sense of a “stairwell” or a “relation.” In other words, in the performative act of language utterance – whether spoken or written – a multitude of connections are established between the one who utters and the one who interprets the utterance, as well as between every other point of reference, meaning the whole spatial and temporal context of this performative act.

“Hybridity” stands at the beginning and at the end of what I call the “metaprocess of hybridization,” whilst as an outcome of this process both “hybridities” become “hybridized” or “altered” through the establishment of multiple connections “in-between.” The result of this process are “in-betweens” which link “hybridity a” and “hybridity b” and can be understood as relations. Berner’s “relationizing” concept fits well into a terminology that tries to operationalize “hybridization” because, I argue, “hybridization” can be described by analyzing its traces, the relationizings between “hybrid a” and “hybrid b,” on the textual level. The relationizings refer to the “idea of the stairwell”: The very fact that a connection is established alters and transforms, or, to put it in Bhabha’s words, “hybridizes” the “hybrid a” and “hybrid b.” The establishment of a relation is always likewise an alteration.

I propose that we can usefully understand “hybridization” as a metaprocess that can be divided into several parts. The metaprocess comprises the establishment of relations between “hybrid a” and “hybrid b” in a process through which certain elements and structures become related to each other. As a means of differentiating how these relations come about, several verbs can be used to describe the “transfer” of elements and structures into “spaces” in which they reappear as “traces of hybridization.” This is initiated in “some kind of contact.” The term “encounter” is included in this technical vocabulary to specify the idea of “some kind of contact,” and will be concretized in the next chapter. I am aware that by using these terms I necessarily import semantic limitations, underlying biases, and other epistemological difficulties into the language used to describe the metaprocess. The systematization of “hybridization” provided here is an analytical tool and its *usefulness* must be proven in its application in the analyses of my sources. “Encounters” can be identified as the preconditions of the processes of “hybridization” which I seek to describe in this book. “Global history” provides ideas about “global connections” in which encounters happen. These approaches are discussed in the following to enrich and concretize the analytical tool.

4.4 A Proposal for Operationalizing “Global History:” Wenzlhuemer’s *Globalgeschichte Schreiben*

I will now attempt to bring the operationalization of “hybridity” presented above into dialogue with the “global history” approach, with a special regard for Wenzlhuemer’s proposal for the operationalization of “global history.” The aim of this section is to sharpen the conceptualization of “encounters” in my own approach. In addition, Wenzlhuemer’s ideas about the interplay between actors, structures, and what he calls “transit” will be discussed in order to integrate the idea of “connections,” discussed below, into the operationalization of “hybridity.” This establishes the foundation on the basis of which “relations” can be understood as part of the “global colonial discursive continuum (see next chapter).” The final section of this chapter then goes on to pursue the question of how one can talk about encounters and what role “actors” have in these encounters. Ultimately, this aims at an augmentation of the operationalization of “hybridization.”

Wenzlhuemer’s argument is that Conrad conceptualizes global history as both a perspective and an object of research, which in Wenzlhuemer’s view makes it difficult to conceptualize “connections” as an analytical category. He acknowledges the importance of embedding “connections” into contexts but holds that they should also have their own analytical value. His approach is interesting because he claims that global history should examine the interactions between human actors and global contexts and consider how these actors and contexts are interwoven with one another.¹¹² I argue that these interactions are the prerequisites for a process in which connections are established and manifested as relations in texts.

Wenzlhuemer aims to conceptualize “connections” in his approach in a way that goes beyond their start and end points. In order to do so, he puts forward six terms – “connections, space, time, actors, structures, and transit”¹¹³ – to concretize his notion of “global connections.”¹¹⁴ In the following, these concepts will be described as they are presented by Wenzlhuemer. After each paragraph, I discuss the extent to which the terms could be useful for the operationalization of “hybridity” and ask whether they should be included in that operationalization.

¹¹² Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 19–20.

¹¹³ “Verbindungen, Raum, Zeit, Akteure, Strukturen und Transit.” Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 31.

¹¹⁴ “Globale Verbindungen”. Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 16.

Connections

Wenzlhuemer advances the idea that “connections” are not only defined by their start and their end points but that they “are” in their own right. He suggests that they always exist in the plural and interact in many ways with each other. He identifies “bundles of connections”¹¹⁵ as the clusters in which several local and global connections interact. Based on these bundles, anything can be identified as “local” or “global.” “Connections,” for Wenzlhuemer, are supplemented with “non-connections” which allow the opening of spaces for possibilities that are not actually realized. The interplay between these connections and non-connections is central to the approach Wenzlhuemer takes. A connection is never separated but is rather embedded in manifold other connections and references in an interplay with non-connections. This “bundle of connections” opens up spaces of possibilities and connects different temporalities.¹¹⁶ On his view, these connections connect different “spaces” and “times” (see below). As a term for the interplay of discursive fields in the global colonial discourse, “connections” offers an interesting tool for describing how discourses become entangled. The term (and its parallel “non-connections”¹¹⁷) will thus be used in the following to talk about these entanglements. The connections are structurally similar to the “relations” but they differ in that “relations” are situated on the textual level and understood in the present book as being the result of “hybridization processes” while “connections,” by contrast, are conceptualized as being the preconditions for encounters.

Space

Combining his idea of connections with a fluid concept of space allows Wenzlhuemer to argue that each connection has (or creates) its own “space.” As connections change and multiply, so “spaces” change and multiply as well. On this analysis, actors are involved in multiple “spaces” as they are connected to a multitude of other actors and objects. In this respect, not every “space” is similarly connected but different “spaces” change at different speeds and therefore actors are simultaneously involved in more and less rapid changes. Wenzlhuemer uses the idea of “space” as a catch-all term that subsumes such diverse categories as communication, knowledge, media, geography, etc. It can be read as an umbrella term for the idea of the “bundle of connections” that opens a “space” for multiple

115 “Verbindungsbündel”. Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 40.

116 Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 33–78.

117 “Nicht-Verbindungen”. Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 63.

purposes. While it seems to be a useful term for locating “hybridization” processes, it requires further concretization. In the following, “space” will be used in two ways, either to “describe” media in which “hybridization” takes place or to describe “geographical” regions as the loci of several discursive fields. These fields – as will be seen in a number of examples below and as is implied in both Wenzlhuemer’s idea of connections and Bhabha’s conceptualization of the colonial discourse – are always interconnected with several other fields in the global colonial discursive continuum.

Time

Time can only be described, Wenzlhuemer maintains, by reference to its effects.¹¹⁸ Like “space,” “time” is defined socially by the attribution of meaning to it. One can only analyze, for instance, “Zeitwahrnehmung, Zeitdeutung, Zeitmessung,” but not time as such. As in the case of “space,” “time,” on Wenzlhuemer’s account, is always defined by “connections,” and when the “connections” change, time changes.¹¹⁹ “Time” can thus be understood as determined by manifold connections, some of which are “global.” Therefore global history that is concerned with global “connections” is simultaneously concerned with “time” and with changes in the perception of “time.”¹²⁰

One of the weak points in Wenzlhuemer’s approach is that he talks about “Beziehungen” instead of “Verbindungen” when he discusses “time.” “Time” and “space” thus somehow collapse into one another and are determined by “connections,” “relations,” and “correlations” that he does not seek to problematize. The metaphor of the “connection,” which is thought of as a spatial dimension, is substituted by “relation,” which is understood as a temporal dimension. But herein lies a problem, for he maintains the metaphor of a fluid relational “time” and a relatively stable “space” and this distinction does not fit with what he seeks to describe in his use of these terms.

The examples Wenzlhuemer provides in his discussions of both “space” and “time” are nevertheless still instructive. Telegraphic technology, which had achieved a “global” spread by the middle of the 19th century, did indeed connect different “spaces” and “times” and in doing so changed them. But the categories of “space” and “time” as described by Wenzlhuemer are underdetermined and

118 “Erfahrbar wird Zeit, ähnlich wie Raum, erst durch zeitliche Beziehungen, die Menschen, Dinge, Ereignisse usw. zueinander haben.” Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 112.

119 Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 81–113.

120 Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 114.

too vague to prove useful as analytical tools. I agree with Wenzlhuemer that the technologies he describes increased the density of connections and therefore the pace of changes in both “time” and “space.” I also agree that these changes and interconnections connected several “spaces” and “times” in “new” and “altered” ways, which influenced how they were perceived. However, it is problematic for the category of “time” as an analytical term that it remains rooted in the idea of a linear chronology. If the term is used to talk comparatively about different speeds of development, this comparison inherently implies the passing of judgments about relative “progress” and “progression” that are connected to the grand narrative of (European) “modernization.” For this reason – and also because Wenzlhuemer neither discusses nor “solves” this problem – I opt not to use this category as an analytic tool.

Actors

The “actor” is given a central position in Wenzlhuemer’s conception of “global history.” First, he defines actors as humans who have *agency* and act according to their capacities within certain boundaries.¹²¹ According to him, this allows us to understand the actor as, on the one hand, determined by circumstances while also being, on the other hand, the creator of these circumstances. On this understanding, actors are the focalization points of “connections” and “spaces,” and are “translators between spaces and/or connections.”¹²² Actors thus transfer agency onto the connections and are influenced by the changing of “spaces.” It is in terms of this interplay between actors, connections, and spaces that, according to Wenzlhuemer, a “global history” perspective should analyze “history.” He claims that “global history” should not only say that there are connections but should also explain how these connections can have an actual impact on historical events, or, to put it another way, they should explain how “connections” can have agency. Against this background, he is interested in the question of how actors act and think. He maintains that they think and act within “overlapping contexts”¹²³ and manifold “meaning correlations”¹²⁴ which they connect with each other. Actors have a “Scharnierfunktion,”¹²⁵ and this is why they bring

¹²¹ Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 145.

¹²² “Übersetzer zwischen diesen Räumen und/oder Verbindungen”. Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 149.

¹²³ “Sich überlappenden Kontexten”. Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 176.

¹²⁴ “Bedeutungszusammenhängen”. Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 176. One could also use the word “connections” or “relations” here.

¹²⁵ Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 187.

together different “spaces,” “times,” and contexts in a given local event. In describing this “Scharnierfunktion,” one might say – in order to overcome the problem in Wenzlhuemer’s terminology – that actors “translate” connections into “relations.” This is precisely what makes Wenzlhuemer’s understanding of actors interesting for my attempt to conceptualize “encounters.”¹²⁶

Structures

The interplay between “actors” and “structures” is one of the main subjects in all the humanities. There is more than one book to be written about how “structures” and “actors” interact, but here we are only interested in Wenzlhuemer’s proposal insofar as it leads to a better understanding of encounters. His overarching point is that there are complex interplays between actors and structures. This idea allows one to think of encounters as a kind of interplay from which unpredictable effects can emerge. Wenzlhuemer explains that structures either manifest in infrastructures or as sociocultural and socioeconomical ways of “thinking” or “doing.” Wenzlhuemer’s approach falls short of conceptualizing the difference between these kinds of structures. Instead, he claims that infrastructures can be analyzed as being “representative of structures in general.”¹²⁷ This claim seems to downplay important differences between “structures” and “infrastructures.” However, what is persuasive about his understanding of structures is that he conceives them as being dependent on actors. On his view, structures can only have agency because of the agency invested in them by actors. This makes them dependent on the actors who invest agency into them while at the same time they also transcend any given particular individual because the structure includes and connects many different people. From this perspective, structures also have an overarching agency which might have a number of possible effects, both locally and globally, that were not anticipated by the actors involved in the creation of this agency. When this view is applied to global connections, structures often appear as the mediators that transmit local agency into the global context. In Wenzlhuemer’s descriptions, the structures constituted by the network of telegraphs and the global transport system of railways and seaways are structures par excellence.¹²⁸

126 Although Wenzlhuemer draws from the “actor-network theory” (see below), which would have to be considered separately to be properly evaluated and operationalized for this book, his idea of actors provides an important addition to the operationalization of “hybridity.”

127 “Stellvertretend für Strukturen im Allgemeinen.” Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 149–92.

128 Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 217–20.

The category of “structure” resists incorporation into the operationalization of “hybridity.” On Bhabha’s view, the “act of speaking” is the locus of agency, but this is hard to reconcile with Wenzlhuemer’s idea of “structures,” an idea that is deeply rooted in the “actor-network theory.” The transfer of agency points to the relative independence of structures from the individual actor and presents structures as being relatively stable.¹²⁹ It would make sense to include “structures” as the institutions of discourse, in Foucault’s sense of the notion,¹³⁰ within the concept of “hybridization.” However, the “actor-network theory” has its own theoretical program – with all the biases and difficulties that entails – which cannot be discussed here in appropriate depth. The same is true for Foucault’s theoretical approach(es).

These points indicate the difficulties that arise from combining different theories in an eclectic way, as I have attempted to do here. When the term “structures” is used in the following – with the exception of the idea of the transfer of “structures” in the processes of “hybridization” – I usually refer to infrastructures without stressing any transfer of agency or the institutionalization of the discourse. However, one point is of crucial importance and is implied whenever I refer to “structures” in what follows: “Structures” should be understood as “mediators” which connect actors and which are, themselves, part of the “hybridization” process.

Transit

The interplay between actor and structure, and especially the transmission of agency to the (infra)structures, is based on concepts drawn from actor-network theory, the most prominent proponent of which is Bruno Latour. Building on this theoretical foundation, Wenzlhuemer claims that “connections” are not simply “intermediaries” but “mediators.” The difference is that “intermediaries” connect points but do not influence these points. “Mediators,” on the other hand, “transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning of the elements they are supposed to carry.”¹³¹ This is the basis on which, Wenzlhuemer argues, “transit” should be analyzed more deeply. He claims that transit does not

129 Bruno Latour, “Eine Soziologie ohne Objekt? Anmerkungen zur Interobjektivität,” *Berliner Journal für Soziologie*, no. 2 (2001).

130 Reiner Keller, *Wissenssoziologische Diskursanalyse*, 3rd ed., Interdisziplinäre Diskursforschung (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2011), 127; Michel Foucault, *Überwachen und Strafen: Die Geburt des Gefängnisses*, Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 184 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1977).

131 Bruno Latour cited in Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 222.

simply involve a going from a starting point to an endpoint but that it is, rather, a phase of transition in which actors, connections, structures, and, therefore, times and spaces are interconnected. In Wenzlhuemer's formulation, "transit" is closely linked to material forms of transit. He uses the examples of the transit of people in trains and on ships.¹³² Transit from England to India, for example, took at least three to four weeks. During the transit, a ship was both a kind of closed space yet at the same time embedded within manifold global and local connections of varying strength through its radio telegraph (although this was frequently unreliable and often did not work), the shipping company (structures) to which it belonged, and the people on board (actors). Worldwide radio connections were only established at the beginning of the 20th century. The main point is that all sorts of transit that are induced by encounters have their own temporal and spatial dimensions in which multifaceted "connections" and "relations" are at play.¹³³ This idea of "transit" is of great interest for the argument developed in this book because it stresses the transformative character of, and the multiple interconnections and influences which take place in, these transits. Nonetheless, Wenzlhuemer's focus on the means of transportation and the transitional character of these means falls outside the scope of this book.

4.5 The Notion of the Global Colonial Discursive Continuum

Discourses are not closed or fixed but are potentially interconnected with one another. This is what is connoted by the formulation "global colonial discursive continuum." This continuum is understood by me as being constituted by numerous local discursive fields that are connected to each other by what Wenzlhuemer calls "connections," that is, what establishes these local fields as simultaneously "global." The "discursive fields" are – as is implied in both Wenzlhuemer's idea of connections and Bhabha's conceptualization of the colonial discourse – understood as being interconnected, potentially at least, to

¹³² It would be interesting to follow this idea in connection with Annie Besant's manifold steamship and train journeys around the globe. I think that it would explain at least one thing: the immense literary output of Annie Besant. Traveling in the 19th century meant sometimes traveling for weeks at a time, which would one allow to work intensively. But this was also a time during which one would have had the opportunity to meet new people and talk to them. In Annie Besant's case, it can be assumed that she met many important people and political allies on trains and ships. A detailed study of this "connection" must, however, remain a research desideratum for the time being.

¹³³ Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 223–54.

all other fields (although geographical, and thematic, proximity increases the chance that the connections will actually be realized). Connections may be realized in encounters, whether these are encounters between actors or encounters between an actor and a text.

Wenzlhuemer's considerations help us to conceptualize these encounters as moments of contact between actors that take place in certain structures while diverse discursive fields become connected in the global colonial discursive continuum. The "global colonial discursive continuum" is understood as an abstract concept which includes all possible discourses in the colonial period at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Numerous discursive fields are brought into relation in these encounters because actors usually belong to several discursive fields. The "actors" in these "fields" can be understood as the translators of "connections" into "relations" as they partake in the discourse and repeat certain "elements" or "structures" in diverse acts of speaking which are then "hybridized." A "field of encounters" is also understood as part of that global colonial discursive continuum, within which it constitutes a single discursive field that became connected to several others by the encounters that took place therein.

4.6 Proposal for a Systematization of "Hybridity"

My use of the word "encounters" here comes close to Wenzlhuemer's idea of "transit." I understand encounters as "episodes of mediation," in the sense that in an encounter several discursive fields become connected through contexts, actors, and structures. As I work on a textual level, I understand texts as the results of encounters in which manifold discursive fields were connected and placed into relationships with one another. This is what makes them "hybrid." Actors can encounter text as "already hybrids" which have their own agency in the sense that actors have transferred agency to them. Wenzlhuemer's considerations help us to conceptualize these encounters as moments of contact between actors that take place in certain structures while diverse discursive fields become connected in the global colonial discursive continuum. The "global colonial discursive continuum" is understood as an abstract concept which includes all possible discourses in the colonial period at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. This continuum is understood as being constituted by numerous local discursive fields that are connected to each other by what Wenzlhuemer calls "connections," that is, what establishes them as "global" simultaneously. Within the local discursive fields – "local" in the sense that actors have to be located in contexts – several actors can encounter each other. These encounters

take place in numerous structures which work as intermediators between the actors. Numerous discursive fields are brought into relation in these encounters because actors usually belong to several discursive fields. The actors in these fields can, as described above, be understood as the translators of connections into relations as they partake in the discourse and repeat certain elements or structures in diverse acts of speaking which are then “hybridized.” Understanding actors as temporal focalization points of “hybridization processes” allows the conceptualization of texts as manifestations of these temporal focalizations.

Using the terminology summarized below to describe the “relations” and the “hybridization processes” to which they refer will allow a more detailed picture of these processes to emerge. The table included here is the endpoint of an abductive process between the theoretical framework of this book and the sources analyzed using this framework. The analysis at times demanded an adjustment of the tool.

Table 2: Parts of “hybridization”. By the author.

Parts of “hybridization”	Terminology
1. Processes of “hybridization”	I. Translation II. De- and recontextualization III. Tradition IV. Relationalization
2. Movement	I. To transfer (most general) II. To translate (from one linguistic system to another) III. To de- and recontextualize (in the same linguistic system) IV. To repeat (result of the hybridization process)
3. Already Hybrids	I. Element(s) II. Structure(s)
4. Abstract “spaces” of encounters Impart agents of encounters with power and authority. Shape the actual “spaces” of encounters according to the institutionalized discourses	I. Discursive fields which are potentially interconnected in the “global colonial discursive continuum” II. Connections describe the realized “potential connections”
5. Actual “spaces” encounters Are not neutral as they can be understood as “institutionalized” discourses	I. Context(s) (cities, towns etc.) II. Medium(s) (journals, newspapers, magazines etc.) III. Structures (e.g., the Theosophical Society)

Table 2 (continued)

Parts of “hybridization”	Terminology
6. Encounter	I. Contact (precondition) II. Interaction
7. Agents of encounters Are not neutral because they occupy certain positions of power due to their institutionalized and/or charismatic authority	I. Actors II. Texts
8. Traces (often hegemonic attempts to close the discourse)	I. Multifaceted relationizings on the structure and the element-level and between structures and elements (cf. Table 1). II. References III. Structures and/or elements IV. Transliterated and/or translated words
9. Results	I. Relations II. In-betweens