

SOCIAL IDENTITIES

Journal for the
Study of Race,
Nation and
Culture



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

ISSN 1350-4630

Narrative Authority: Performing the Postcolonial Self

Ajit Maan

Postcolonial displacement and resulting cultural nomadism of second generation diasporia is often associated with loss, lack, exile. This author's position is that the cultural and linguistic margins that nomads inhabit are places of abundance and possibility. Establishing decolonized autobiographical authority necessitates the type of recognition, deconstruction, and re-association that second generation diasporic populations are uniquely positioned to undertake.

... the monolingualism of the other would be that sovereignty, that law originating from elsewhere ... appropriated in order to understand it *as if* I was I was giving it to myself ... monolingualism imposed by the other operates by relying upon that foundation through a sovereignty whose essence is always colonial ... (Derrida, 1998, p. 39)

I am optimistic about the creative possibilities of a performative response to the subject-effects of colonialism. Why optimism? Because the ability of the postcolonial to transcend pre-determined identity categories is enabled by the marginal space that the postcolonial inhabits; the key to the problem, as in many good narratives, lies in the problem itself.

In the following pages I will explore the unique self-constitutional capacities of the postcolonial by first exploring the insidious effects of colonial translation (linguistic, cultural, and ontological), by making a crucial ontological distinction between colonized people and their heirs, and then by articulating the capacities for unenculturated autobiography—a capacity enabled by difference and contradiction.

These processes of development are generational, they involve interpretation, and they are cyclical. Therefore, reference to a multi-tiered hermeneutical circle, spiralling upward, will be made throughout the paper and can be conceived as follows. The process begins at the bottom and works upwards:

Ajit Maan, 134 Marlboro Lane, Eugene, OR 97405, USA. E-mail: ajitmaan@comcast.net

