

## Gaze on/from the Caged Latino Bodies: Imaginary of Tropics and Postcolonial Savage of *The Couple in the Cage*

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### Abstract

“Tropicalization,” first conceived in Levis Strauss’ “Tristes Tropiques,” has been employed by scholars of Latino studies to indicate the cultural contact, travel, translation, and transformation across the United States and its border of the South. Drawing on Coco Fusco and Guillermo G3mez-Peña’s performance in *The Couple in the Cage*, this essay investigates how the two artists recycle tropes and images of Tropics in what they termed “reverse ethnography,” tracing the disavowed difference of the other and the residual meaning of colonial representation. Their project includes a two-year performance tour around the metropolises in three continents from 1992 to 1993; a video documentary, *The Couple in the Cage* (1993); and an article, “The Other History of Intercultural Performance,” (1995) which documents audience responses as well as Fusco’s reflections and self-critiques.

Employing Judith Butler’s theory of performativity and Homi K. Bhabha’s theorization on the Third Space representation, this essay also attempts to inquire: why and how does the artists’ hybridization of pre-Hispanic savage, subaltern in style and postcolonial chic, create the uncanny encounter for the spectators in modern metropolises? How do they employ inside/out border art to turn their bodies into the cultural and social arena where ideas, myths,

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fiction, ideologies, and social models are produced, negotiated, and contested? The performativity of postcolonial savage initiates an ambivalent process which disrupts the unitary gaze and the monolithic narrative of European modernity and colonialism; it brings to panorama the diverse enunciation loci and the complex transnational communities among which the ethnic subalterns endeavor to speak.

**Keywords:** Latino theater, border art, postcolonial, performativity, the Third Space, Cosmopolitanism, tropical, subaltern, ethnicity, theatricality, ethnography, cosmopolitan

## **Latino Bodies, Imaginary of Tropics, and Ethnographic Gaze**

Historically and culturally, the term “tropicalization” connotes the cultural ambivalence and paradox between Anglo-American mainstream culture and Latino culture. “Tropicalization,” first conceived in Levis Strauss’ “Tristes Tropiques,” has been employed by scholars of Latino studies to indicate the cultural contact, travel, translation, and transformation across the United States and Caribbean countries, Mexico, Central and South American countries. However, the so-called “tropicalization” has long appeared intertwined with the Anglo-Saxon imaginary of the exotic and erotic “other” from the border of the South (Aparicio and Chavez-Silverman 1-3). In response to the tremendous growth of Latino population, American cultural industries have to incorporate needs and tastes not only along the axis of white/black, but along that of “chocolate” and “brown.”

In 2000, the U.S. census indicated for the first time in history that Latino population in the United States had climbed to 35 million, overtaking that of Afro-Americans by five millions (Tilove 1). The rapid and sharp increase of Latino population has changed American cultural productions and markets. In metropolises with large Latino population such as New York, Los Angeles, and San Antonio, Spanish signs and instructions are juxtaposed with English ones at Government buildings, department stores, restaurants, and supermarkets. With Spanish surnames increasing five times faster than those of the general population, Salsa is becoming the predominant ethnic rhythm (and flavor) of contemporary American urban lifestyle. In Los Angeles, Houston, San Antonio, and Dallas (shortly), Latinos outnumber non-Hispanic whites; in New York, San Diego, and Phoenix, they outnumber blacks. According to the Bureau of the Census, Latinos will supply fully two thirds of the nation’s population growth between now and the middle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century when, at best, nearly 100 million Americans will boast Latin American ancestry.

To appeal to the maximum audience possible, the cultural market must Latinize itself with imaginary of tropics. As a matter of fact, the tropes and images of “tropicalization” pre-existed the rhetoric and discourses of multiculturalism. For centuries, Latino ethnicities and cultures have been appropriated by American representational apparatuses. The transcultural routing and transformation, likewise, have been embedded within the asymmetrical power relations. “Transculturation,” to quote Diana Taylor, suggests the shifting or circulating pattern of cultural transference, informed by “political positioning and selection.” (Taylor 1991: 61) Such a volatile pattern of cultural transference takes place when two cultures come into contact and absorb each other, demarcating a new discursive sphere from which the third hybridized culture springs.

However, as Taylor stresses, this kind of contact is neither equal nor reciprocal: the dominated culture, such as the third world narratives, usually appears far more acquainted with the first world discourse than the other way around (Taylor 1991: 62). In American mass media and representational apparatuses, the tropical bodies have projected the white's fear, desire, and anxiety of the other under the white narcissistic gaze. The century-old stereotypes have been associated with primitivism, sexualized body, and racialized violence: the bandido, the harlot, the male buffoon, the female clown, the Latin lover, and the dark lady.

Beginning in the 1980s and under the rising of American multiculturalism, "Tropicalization" of Latino presence and image has been polished with improved subtlety and ambiguity; the ideological boundaries, nonetheless, remain unchallenged. Disturbed by the veiled supremacy of Anglo-Saxon narratives in America, Chicano performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña pinpoints such multicultural hypocrisy in his article "The Multicultural Paradigm" by drawing our attention to how white dominants appropriate and co-opt Latino cultures "as a kind of Esperantic Disney World, a tutu-frutti cocktail of cultures, languages, and art forms in which 'everything becomes everything else,' and nothing is really indispensable." (52). He further observes that Anglo-Americans have tampered with the spiritual and aesthetic forms of Latino culture without genuine experiences of political violence and cultural conflicts; they equate Latino culture and arts with irrationality and primitivism. He writes:

We are undetermined "objects of desire" within a meta-landscape of Mac Fajitas. La Bamba crazes, MTV border rock. Pepsi ads in Spanish, and Chicano art without thorns . . . the contemporary art world needs and desires the spiritual and aesthetic models of Latino culture without having to experience our political outrage and cultural contradictions. . . . our art is described as "colorful," "passionate," "mysterious," exuberant," "baroque," etc., all euphemistic terms for irrationalism and primitivism. (52)

### **Transnational and Transcultural Performance of Caged Latino Bodies**

To interrogate the Big Blog of multiculturalism which mishmashes everything "tropical" and "Latino," Guillermo Gómez-Peña collaborates with a radical female performance artist, Coco Fusco (a Cuban American) for an art project aimed at re-appropriating the tropes and images of tropics to represent the political violence and cultural conflicts experienced by Latino people since pre-Hispanic time. Seeing that "the white hegemony perpetrates the monocultural 'us' (the white) versus multicultural 'them' (the Latino) dichotomy," they slip into

the same exclusive strategy in reverse, raising their own “multicultural ‘us’ versus monocultural ‘them’ dichotomy” (Gómez-Peña 52). Imbuing their performance with border experience and inside/out border art, Fusco and Gómez-Peña aim at subversive meaning-making. In the form and spirits of what they called “reverse ethnography,” they launched a 2-year transnational and transcultural project, *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit. . .*, in 1992 to interrogate the western ethnographic gaze on the “authentic” native and “primitive” “other.” The two performers confined themselves within a cage for three days at an outdoor exhibition as if they were recently-discovered indigenous people from Guatinau, a fictive Tropical Island of Caribbean neglected by Europeans for five centuries. They premiered their “cage” performance at the Edge ’92 Biennial, which took place in Madrid and London as part of the quincentennial celebration of Madrid being the capital of European culture. Their performance resonated with Edge’s ambition in locating art in public spaces to create site-specific performance that commemorates the so-called Discovery at Columbus Plaza in Madrid. After their premiere, they toured around Covent Garden, London (1992), Minneapolis (1992), Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History (1992), the Australian Museum of Natural History in Sydney (1992), the Field Museum of Chicago (1993), and the Whitney Museum in New York (1993) (Fusco 39).

Interrogating the colonialist discourse and gaze on the tropical bodies since Columbus discovered America in 1492, the two performers turn their own caged bodies to the spectacle as well as the contesting arena against the colonial theatricality, which features drama of discovery and the display of native bodies. The cage not only constitutes their physical boundaries, but also symbolizes the aesthetic frame and political bracket of the aesthetic, political and perspectival structures of colonial theatricality which prescribes natives with no political agency.

In *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit. . .*, Fusco and Gómez-Peña satirically don mishmash costumes of stereotypical “native” wear (straw skirt, feather hat, ornate ritualistic garb) and contemporary gear (sunglasses, sneakers, wristwatch) that violates their “primitive” façades. Fusco puts on a leopard skin bikini top, a grass skirt, and a pair of black Converse sneakers. Her face is painted with green and yellow stripes; her hair hangs in long braided extensions by a backwards black baseball cap. Gómez-Peña paces in the cage wearing Guatemalan shorts and breastplate. His face is covered by a latex black and yellow ski mask topped with feathered headdress; his arms and neck, similarly, are covered in spiked leather jewelry. Both of them wear dark sunglasses. Gómez-Peña orates “authentic American stories” in nonsensical “Guatinauian language.” Fusco munches food, performing “traditional Guatinauian dance” to the tune of rap, or sewing Voodoo doll. The two captives sometimes watch television, play with the laptop,

or do weightlifting as if two naive and curious creatures overwhelmed by “toys” of the civilized world.

Acting like captives in display, the two performers avoid talking, eye-contacting, or interacting with each other. Two mimic “zoo guards” stand by the cage, speaking to the spectators as “interpreters” in an authoritative tone and exaggeratingly “objective” attitude. Sometimes they take the captives to bathroom on leash, and feed them with sandwich and fruits. With the help of these colonial guards, the two captives offer a wide choice of interactions with spectators. As long as any spectator throws one dollar into the donation box before the cage, they would dance to rap, tell stories in nonsensical language, or pose for Polaroids with the spectators. In the Whitney museum in New York, they added sex to their spectacle: for five dollars, they offer visitors a peek at “authentic Guatanaian male genitals” (Fusco 39). While Fusco and G3mez-Pe3a adopt at times embarrassing self-display to rebuke the inhumanity of colonial voyeurism and to caricature the present-day ethnographic tourism, they also attempt to manipulate situations to their advantage. Toying with the spectators’ desire, they act like “ludicrous” natives to entice the audience into perpetrating the flagrant colonial folly. During their live performance in three continents, videographers walk around the crowds to record spectators peering at the caged brown bodies, asking the spectators questions and documenting their responses.

Their “cage” performance, as a matter of fact, is preceded by a much earlier “caged body” performance featuring Hsieh Tehching, an immigrant artist from Taiwan. During 1978-1979, Hsieh Tehching enacted a year-long project, *Caged*, living in an eight-by-nine-by-twelve-foot cage in his New York loft. He locked himself without speaking, reading, or communicating with the outside world as a testimony to his own ascetic endurance. The cage represents both the physical and the symbolic frame. His extreme concept/body art—melding existential concept and life—staked out a substantial claim in the 1970s conceptual art market. In this vein, Hsieh’s *Caged* belongs to the same conceptual/body art universe that contains Christ and Burden’s daredevil projects from 1970s (Cheng 154). Tracing Hsieh’s conceptual/body art against Fusco and G3mez-Pe3a’s cage performance, Meiling Cheng offers critical observations for comparison and contrast. While Hsieh’s cage remains rooted in Manhattan and most of his performance is observed by himself alone, Fusco and G3mez-Pe3a’s cage travels through natural history museums in three continents; their performances are observed by thousands of spectators, some of whom do not realize that they are watching an art project. In the role of performance artist, Hsieh presents himself as a practitioner of a peculiarly existential and ascetic status. How he presents himself visually has little bearing on his endurance event, which does not tackle/elaborate on the

artist's identity as an Asian male. In contrast, Fusco and G3mez-Peña rely on visual representation to enact their postcolonial identity politics. Their visual strategies, Cheng stresses, concentrate at re/presenting the "simultaneous quotation and misquotation" of racial stereotypes to display themselves as exotic images of "savage" otherness. Their piece appropriates, so as to satirize, "the demeaning Western anthropological convention of exhibiting nonwhite humans in museums, carnival fairs, and other public places" (Cheng 154).

Performing caged bodies and mock freak show, Fusco and Guillermo G3mez-Peña attempt to interrogate white spectators' ethnographic gaze on the racial, deformed, or disfigured others by exhibiting them in "tavern, theaters, gardens, museums, zoos, circuses, and world fairs of Europe, and the freak shows in the United States" for "aesthetic contemplation, scientific analysis, and entertainment." (Fusco 4). Fusco's own disturbing experience during the caged performance reveals that contemporary Latino performers remain vulnerable to the ethnographic gaze rampant behind the disguise of multiculturalism. Fusco claims, "the central position of the white spectator, the objective of these events as a confirmation of their position as global consumers of exotic culture, and the stress on authenticity as an aesthetic value, all remain fundamental to the spectacle of Otherness many continue to enjoy" (47). In his book, *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freak and the American Cultural Imagination*, Rachel Adams traces the historical and cultural contexts that promote the non-normative as spectacle. She argues that such "freak shows" have been employed for entertainment as well as visualization of American normative ideologies of race, gender and the body, "allowing ordinary people to confront, and master, the most extreme and terrifying forms of Otherness they could imagine, from exotic dark-skinned people, to victims of war and disease, to ambiguous bodies" (2).

### **Colonial Theatricality and the Spectacle of Otherness**

The spectacles of otherness are always intertwined with voyeurism and epistemological violence. In the colonial theatricality, the white conqueror has been elevated to the top of the aesthetic, political, and perspectival structures where he contains those natives who enter his political and scopic fields. The forces of other have been transformed into something that can be measured, governed and controlled. In order to consolidate white supremacy, the brown or dark-skinned natives are either domesticated or expelled as the constituent outside. The colonial theatricality has been governed by the unidirectional gaze and monolithic narrative with prescribed characters. As Taylor remarks, "the show is always

structured in the same way. No matter who tells the story—the playwright, the discoverer, or the government official—it stars the same white male protagonist-subject and the same brown ‘found’ object” (Taylor 1998:162). The colonialist theatricality began with Columbus’ discovery of America. In his first letter of First Voyage (1493), he wrote of the Indians as cannibals he had never seen—“born with tails” and “wear their long hair like women” (15). The women were equally threatening: they “employ themselves in no labor suitable for their sex, for they use bows and javelins” (15). However, he brought the power of civilization to the native’s redemption. Columbus claims that the natives espouse the notions of his divine superiority with awe and wonder: “they continue to entertain the idea that I have descended from heaven; and on our arrival at any new place they published this, crying out immediately with a loud voice to the other Indians, ‘Come, come and look upon beings of a celestial race’” (9). As Columbus returned to Spain, he authenticated his story of discovery by thus announcing: “I bring with me individuals of this island and of the others that I have seen, who are proofs of the facts which I state” (15). He shipped some Arawarks back to Spain, one of whom had been displayed in Spanish court until he died of “sadness” two years later (Fusco 41). For centuries, the displays of brown or dark natives in public disturb viewers with the “unnatural” and violent history of re/presenting the non-western as exotic, savage, and barbarian. On the other hand, the caging also produces “pedagogies” of colonial history by containing rebellious individuals from pre-Hispanic time to contemporary Latin Americas. The history of displaying the Indians from Central and South America is illustrated in Fusco’s “The Other History of Intercultural Performance,” the afterthought and documents of the *Couple in the Cage* art project. For instance, in 1550s, Native Americans were brought to France to build a Brazilian village in Rouen. The French King, however, ordered his soldiers to set the village in flames as a form of performance and entertainment. In 1834, after General Rivera’s cavalry had perpetrated the genocide of all Indians in Uruguay, four surviving Charrúas were brought to the Natural Sciences Academy in Paris as specimens of a vanished people. During 1853-1901, two microcephalic San Salvadorans were toured across Europe and the Americas for display, billed as “the last Aztec survivors of a mysterious jungle city called Ixinaya.” Even as recently as in 1992, a black female midget was exhibited at the Minnesota State Fair, billed as “Tiny Teesha, the Island Princess” (Fusco 41-43).

In this vein, Fusco and G3mez-Peña’s *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit. . .* is a citational and reiterative practice of colonial encounter with an ironic twist. Restoring viewers to the ideological framework of coloniality, they co-present the deracinated past and the informed present on either side of the bars. Placed



within the simulated drama of discovery, many audience members assume the role of colonizer/discoverer who sees, scrutinizes, and interprets the caged captives. “As we assumed the stereotypical role of the domesticated savage, many audience members felt entitled to assume the role of the colonizer,” says Fusco (47). However, they also subvert the repeated “encounter narrative” by strategically casting prescribed roles to performative ambiguity and rendering them with dual discursive possibilities: they are immediately the natives being displayed, objectified, and removed from any living context; they are also the observers gazing from within the cage, scrutinizing and analyzing the spectators’ responses and behaviors. During their performances, videographers circle around the crowds, raising questions and recording spectators’ responses. In addition to their live performances across different continents, their art project also includes a video documentary, *The Couple in the Cage* (1993), created by Coco Fusco and Paula Heredia, and Fusco’s article, “The Other History of Intercultural Performance” (1995), documenting and reflecting a number of events as the meta-drama and meta-narrative of their performance. The video documentary illustrates their intent of the performance, juxtaposes footage of historical human display with scenes adopted from their own performances, and features spectators’ responses and comments. Likewise, Fusco’s article also documents their performances across different continents as well as relevant reflections and self-critiques.

They situate their performances mostly at historical sites and natural history museums, the most revered legitimate structures of civil societies to have archived the dehumanizing practices of colonial encounters with “authenticity.” Beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, museums have become the legitimate institution of colonial theatricality. They remove the colonized others from socio-geographical realities, framing them behind the sealing glass as cultural artifices, fragments, and dead objects beyond the reach of spectators. Through collection and classification, museum anthologizes histories and traditions, mandates dominant values, and generates an asymmetrical framework of knowledge that contains the discursive others as the metonymy or synecdoche of primitive mystery, deviant sexuality, scientific specimen, or threatening alterity.

In *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit*. . . , on a plate leaning against the cage, Fusco and G3mez-Pe3a fabricate ethnographic narrative with a feigned landscape of Guatinau Island:

The male and female specimens here on display are representatives of the dominant tribe from their island, having descended from the Mintomanistock. The male weighs seventy-two kilos, measures 1.77 meters, and is approximately thirty-seven years of age . . . his frequent pacing in the cage leads experts to believe that he was a political leader on his island. The female weighs sixty-three kilos, measures 1.74 meters, and

appears to be in her early thirties. . . . Her facial and body decorations indicate that she has married into the upper caste of her tribe. (Fusco 59)

The made-believe illustration of “pseudo-scientific data” exposes the constructedness and objectification of ethnography. Attempting to engage themselves in a dialogue with “the other history,” the performers’ socio-political critique lies in parody and irony. Another passage of pseudo ethnographic narrative functions as a parody of the voyeuristic gaze and tropical imaginary to associate the brown bodies with overt sexuality. Mimicking the authoritative tone of museum diorama, the text on the taxonomic plates describes the brown natives’ overt sexual behavior:

Both of the Guatinauis are quite affectionate in the cage, seemingly uninhibited in their physical and sexual habits despite the presence of an audience. Their animist spirituality compels them to engage in periodic gestural prayers, which they do with great enthusiasm. They like to massage and scratch each other, enjoy occasional long embraces, and initiate sexual intercourse on the average twice a day.

Anthropologists at the Smithsonian observed (with the help of surveillance cameras) that the Guatinauis enjoy gender role playing together after dark, transforming many of their functional objects in the cage into makeshift sex toys by night. Visitors who get close to them will note that they often seek to fondle strangers while posing for photographs. (Fusco 59)

Despite the performers’ ambition of socio-political critique, many spectators overlook their intended irony due to the regulatory nature of museum *per se* as a densely political space to bracket interpretative possibilities. Issues of narrative authority and ownership, likewise, never cease to plague the already thorny relationship between museums and their cultural, ethnographical as well as anthropological artifacts housed within. Museums authenticate exhibited artifacts by affirming them as specimens of “other histories” and impose upon them—under their anthologizing power—a singular interpretation to anchor the discursive significance of their installations. Spectators touring museums of national history tend to be overwhelmed by the authenticity of artifacts on exhibition, while such “interpreted authenticity” hinges primarily on subscribing to the authoritative “expertise” feigned by such institutions as legitimate narrators. Spectators, therefore, miss the potent critique and irony concealed within Fusco and Gómez-Peña’s seemingly ludicrous performance. Rather than viewing it as a mock show of colonial encounter, they tend to believe that the illustrations are bits and pieces of “real history” of a certain aboriginal people. In this respect, these spectators become the “duped” voyeuristic colonizers while Fusco and Gómez-Peña succeed in enacting complicities in the colonialist discourse, recycling tropical imaginary and racial stereotypes.

The peeping show of the diorama is accentuated as some spectators project their desire and fantasy onto the caged brown bodies. During the performances, Fusco and G3mez-Pe3a were both confronted with aggressive sexual challenges. Many people chose a more discrete way to express their curiosity, inquiring the zoo guards if they mated in public in the cage. Some visitors, nevertheless, perpetrated offensive behaviors and language. Erotizing the tropical bodies, Fusco observes, women are more physical in their reactions while men are more verbally abusive. Usually male visitors taunted her, spoke nastily, asked her out, and even blew kisses to her. They do not, however, attempt to have physical contacts with Fusco. Many men in Spain made highly charged sexual comments on Fusco's body, coaxing others into donating more money to see her breasts as she danced. She was also asked out on dates a few times in London. Women, on the other hand, acted differently. In Irvine, a white woman asked for a plastic glove in order to touch the male specimen, and then she began to touch G3mez-Pe3a's legs and his crotch. He stepped back and the woman stopped, but she returned the same evening, eager to discuss their feelings about her gesture. In Sydney, a female reporter from a porn magazine wanted to do a photo in which she would appear topless, feeding the performers with bananas and watermelon, but she was refused by the museum publicist (Fusco 57). Compared to Fusco, G3mez-Pe3a found the experience of being continually objectified more difficult to tolerate. By the end of their first three days in Madrid, they began to realize that people's assumptions about them were based upon gender stereotypes, while Fusco's experiences as a woman had better prepared her to shield herself psychologically from the violence. In more adventurous New York, the performers of *Dance Noise* and *Charles Atlas* grasped the duo's concealed satire, screaming loudly at G3mez-Pe3a to "free his genitalia" when he unveiled a crotch with his penis hidden between his legs instead of hanging (53). Several young artists also lodged their complaints with the sponsors by claiming that the duo was not experimental enough to be considered good performance art. Others at the Whitney and in Australia, where many knew they were part of the Sydney Biennale, dismissed their piece as "not critical" (57).

Satiric performance, John Seery writes, relies on both "instrumental and observational irony" to compel reciprocity, provoke thoughts, induce affect, and appeal for actions, a strategy more effective than didactic moral instructions (Seery 190-93). However, the efficacy of irony depends not only on the level of shared knowledge and moral priorities between the performers and the spectators, but also on the context and venue of the performance in question. Performing in venues like museums might risk undermining the efficacy of irony. Museum's authority and legitimacy in defining and depicting the histories of Other, its

symbolic devices and spatial layout of archiving and exhibiting artifacts, data, documents; all these characteristics would affect the way the spectators perceive and interpret the performance. In her *Irony's Edge*, Linda Hutcheon attributes the failed irony of the Royal Ontario Museum's exhibition *Into the Heart of Africa* to the "authority effect" (Hutcheon 180) residing within the architectural design of the imposing buildings themselves. She further points out, "the museum and the academy in Europe and North America have traditionally shared an institutionalized faith in reason and method, not to mention an unavoidable intersection with governmental agencies" (180). The architectural and institutionalized colonial practices aim at collecting, preserving, and displaying artifacts in a Eurocentric way of enlightening and domesticating the "natives." The critique and irony implied by the installation within the museum might be transfigured by its institutional power. As Hutcheon further remarks, irony might be a powerful weapon in contesting imperialism, racism, and colonialism; however, when the critique is mediated by institutions of modernity such as museums, universities, and libraries, irony might be directed at the imperialists at the price of the "natives" (192).

In regard to *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit*. . . , the performers' irony is reconfigured by some critics as a trope deployed by untrustworthy activists and "evil tricksters" who "discredit museums and betray public trust" (Fusco 50). In response, Fusco confutes that underlying these critiques is the problematic presupposition that curators can collect artifacts and accurately construct narratives of indigenous cultures based on aboriginal historical or contemporary realities. She writes, "We were not the only ones who were lying, our lies simply told a different story" (Fusco 50). Her confutation problematizes the expert system and interpretation industry in constructing "the other history." The "native other" has been negatively re/produced in the colonialist discourse that silences the very voice it claims to make speak; therefore, Gayatri Spivak notes, "the subaltern cannot speak" (Spivak 308). This gives rise to what Diana Taylor calls "the industry of experts" (Taylor 1998:180). With malice or good will, linguists, scholars, ethnographers, anthropologists, scientists, and curators approach these natives in earnest, issuing in whose name procrustean statements crowned as their own articulations. But what precisely are the shared ethical and moral priorities of the expert system and interpretation industry? If the subaltern cannot speak, who is eligible to speak for them?

Reflecting on the aftermath of the art project, Fusco and G3mez-Pe3a admit, "[We] underestimated public faith in museum as bastions of truth and institutional investment in the role . . . we did not anticipate that literalism would dominate the interpretation of our work." Fusco recounts how their "fake"

performance causes frustration to the director of Native American programs of Smithsonian: “she was forced to reflect on the rather disturbing revelation that while she made efforts to provide the most accurate representation of Native cultures she could, our ‘fake’ sparked exactly the same reaction from audiences” (Fusco 53). Though problematic and controversial, the “caged couple” provokes a pretext for various institutions to launch internal discussions and self-critiques: how and to what extent can they avoid the colonialist ideologies that permeate their claims of objectivity as bastions of knowledge? In Australia, an aboriginal curatorial committee approved their project, but stipulated that there be nothing aboriginal in the cage, and that cases of aborigines on exhibition be added to their chronology. This proposal was accepted and incorporated into the artists’ performance. With more self-critiques and negotiations among performers, curators, and spectators, reciprocity and hospitality are improved in the transcultural performance aiming at speaking for the subaltern.

Bracketed in the colonial theatricality, many spectators were obsessed with “authenticity.” In Spain, there were numerous complaints that the performers’ skin was not dark enough for them to be “real” primitives. The zoo guards responded by explaining that they live in a rain forest without much exposure to the sun. At the Whitney, a handful of older women also complained the caged natives were too light-skinned, one saying that the piece would only be effective if they were “really dark.” Many took issue with Fusco’s Island rap dance. “It doesn’t look like something I would see on public TV filmed by people who have seen to those cultures,” comments one lady. Some American and European white people spent considerable time staring at the cage, wondering how these Guatinaui could use computers, smoke cigarettes, and exercise in Converse sneakers with such ease (56). Underlying the spectators’ obsession with authenticity is the spectators’ fantasy of tethering to the myth of aboriginal bodies as “over there, outside time, beyond civilization,” and their tendency in preserving the natives in “fixed identity, stable position, and recognizable difference” (Taylor 1998: 165). The spectators’ responses exemplify the hegemonic notions of the colonial power, which presents the colonized as a fixed reality while making them knowable and visible. Some spectators assumed the role of “experts” to interpret their nonsensical vocal sounds. Scenes from video documentary show numerous well-dressed, seemingly middle-class, smiling men and women happily posing for snapshots with the new discovery. A spectator proudly claims that he read all about the Guatinaui Island in *National Geographic*. One lady attempts to interpret G3mez-Peña’s “storytelling,” asserting that he was murmuring some kind of prayer at the beginning of his story (Fusco and Heredia 1993).

Even in the allegedly multi-cultural and multi-racial southern California,

local authorities cannot escape fallacies of xenophobia, regarding aboriginal people as the dangerous, threatening, and polluting other. When the couple arrived at the University of California/Irvine, they learned that the Office of Environmental Health and Safety had understood G3mez-Pe3a and Fusco to be anthropologists bringing “real aborigines” whose excrement—if deposited inside the gallery—could be hazardous to the university. This was particularly significant in light of the school’s location in Orange County, where Mexican immigrants are often characterized by right-wing “nativists” as environmental hazards. Upon request from the art department, the Office sent several pages of instructions on proper disposal of human waste and illustrations of over thirty diseases that were transmitted through excrement. Anxiety and fear of the intrusive other are seen in all metropolises during their performance tour. In London, a group of skinheads attacked G3mez-Pe3a. In Madrid, scores of adolescents stayed at the cage for hours each day, taunting them by offering beer cans filled with urine. Some spectators were less hostile, but their sympathy appears “conditional.” In Washington, D.C., an angry visitor who phoned and complained to the Humane Society was told that human beings were beyond their jurisdiction. However, the majority of audience who were upset remained so only for about five minutes. Some said they felt that the couple’s engagement was justified because they were, after all, different. A group of sailors interviewed by a Field Museum staff member said that their engagement was prudent since they might otherwise have become frightened and attack visitors. One older African American man in Washington asserted quite angrily that these “natives” should bear confinement only if they had some physical defects that made them classified as freaks (Fusco 52). The fear, anxiety, and hysteria of the intrusive other and the “abnormal” bodies—when nakedly projected onto the fictional aboriginal couple—expose the “construction” and “fiction” of colonial imperative, which expels other as the constituent outside so as to consolidate the imperialist hegemony. As Julia Kristeva suggests, the dominant’s repulsion and expulsion of the “threatening” and “polluting” other as “abject” reveals its unitary attempt to consolidate a hegemonic identity as well as to secure the symbolic and social boundary. However, the boundary is porous and permeable seeing that the expelled abject is integral to and residual in the process in which the hegemony has been formed.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Julia Kristeva, *The Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, tran. Leon Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982) 4. Assimilating Douglas’ insights and her own reformulation of Lacan, Kristeva writes on the abject and defilement. Defilement is what becomes jettisoned from the symbolic system. It is what escapes from social rationality, that logical order on which a social aggregate is based. It then becomes differentiated from a temporary agglomeration of individuals and, in short, constitutes a classification system or a structure.

## Postcolonial Performativity and Returning the Colonial Gaze

Though at risk of being complicit in colonialist discourse, Fusco and G3mez-Pe3a appropriate the tropical tropes and imaginary to enact a parody of colonial theatricality with insertions of the political agency of the native (albeit futile at times), destabilizing the binary dichotomy between the colonizer/gazer and the colonized/the gazed, and exposing the contradictions from within. Their art project (the two-year performance tour, the video documentary, and the essay) could be regarded as “transcultural postcolonial performativity.” Judith Butler writes of performativity, “performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate ‘act,’ but, rather, as the iterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names” (Butler 2).<sup>2</sup> In other words, performativity is at once the effect as well as the process of the iterative power in which the regulatory norms constitute the materiality of the body and materialize the difference between the dominant and the dominated in consolidating the hegemonic imperative. However, the process can never be complete and its instabilities pave way for rematerialization, in which “the force of the regulatory law can be turned against itself to spawn rearticulations that call into question the hegemonic force of that very regulatory law” (2). Butler’s concept of performativity mainly focuses on “sex” as the materiality of body as well as the paradoxical iterative and citational practice, which materializes the regulatory norms of “sex” and sexual difference in consolidating the heterosexual imperative. If we align Butler’s theory of performativity with Homi K. Bhabha’s notion of the hybrid “Third Space,” we can be better informed by a more analytical theory of “postcolonial performativity” in investigating Fusco and G3mez-Pe3a’s performance of postcolonial savage in the world’s metropolises. Bhabha employs Derridean difference to explore the enunciation of the Third Space in the (post)colonial context. In Bhabha’s view, the enunciation of the Third Space is imbued with difference, a conceptual

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<sup>2</sup> Thinking of the relationship between the construction of social norms and sex/gender performativity, Judith Butler makes use of the Lacanian notion that every act is to be constructed as a repetition: the repetition of what cannot be recollected, of the irrecoverable; and is thus the haunting spectre of the subject’s deconstitutions. She also resonates with the Derridean notion of iterability, formulated in response to the theorization of speech acts by J. L. Austin, which suggests that every act itself is a recitation, the citing of prior chains of acts which are implied in a present act and which perpetually drain any “present” act of its presentness. Aiming at deconstructing the naturalness and transparency of the gender/sex normality by exposing its imitative status, Butler regards performativity as a double-edged weapon that can either reinforce or subvert the heterosexual normality. Though Butler focuses on sex/gender de/construction as she theorizes the concept of performativity, I would like to employ her theorization to analyze the transcultural postcolonial performance discussed in this essay. See Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993) 1-26.

duality of “difference” and “deferral.” The enunciation of (post)colonial context is a paradoxical and ambivalent process in which the dominant disavows the cultural difference and the temporal disjuncture that disrupt the coherence and haunt the boundary of the symbolic realm of colonialist discourse. On the other hand, the enunciation of the hybrid space is imbued with cultural liminality and Derridean supplementary space, which at once opens up and holds together “the pedagogical” that reiterates and consolidates the colonialist narrative, and “the performative” that evokes the emergence of cultural difference and minority discourse (Bhabha 1990: 299-305, 313-315; 1994: 35-39, 141-47). In other words, postcolonial performativity is at once the effect as well as the process of the iterative and citational practices of the colonial discourse, making possible both identification and disidentification with the regulatory norms and colonialist imperative. In the paradoxical process, the practitioners (or enunciators) are inevitably constrained by the regulatory norms and the pedagogical of the colonial narrative; yet they are also in an unstable and ambivalent state to turn the regulatory laws against themselves, spawning rearticulations that invoke the emergence of cultural difference and minority discourse. In short, the postcolonial performativity is a double-edged weapon that could either reinforce or destabilize the normality and imperative, depending on the enunciation loci and the reception.

Fusco and G3mez-Pe3a’s performativity of postcolonial savage is the double edged weapon and the paradoxical process of carving the enunciation loci for the ethnic subaltern. As mentioned above, their displays of caged bodies in historical sites and museums of natural history render the iterative and citational practices of the colonial legacy of the “discovery” drama, which entices the spectators into becoming “duped” colonizers of the flagrant colonial folly. In the re-enacted drama of colonial encounter, the performers and the spectators conspire to play the prescribed roles to contain the native other within the scopical and political frame as something visible, measurable, and knowable. They re-enact the pedagogies of the colonial theatricality, which domesticate the savages with normative ideologies and authenticate their “otherness” by transforming them into the metonymy or synecdoche of primitive mystery, deviant sexuality, scientific specimen, or threatening alterity. On the other hand, with ironic twist, Fusco and G3mez-Pe3a destabilize the aesthetic and perceptual frame/bars by playing the double role of the gazers and the gazed; and by co-presenting the deracinated past and the informed present on either side of the bars. The aftermath of their performance, coupled with their article and video documentary, constitutes the meta-drama and meta-narrative that invoke the emergence of cultural difference and subaltern enunciation. The video and written documents carrying footage of historical human displays expose the “unnatural” violent history of oppressing



the ethnic others; the controversies aroused by their performance provoke a pretext for various museums and institutions to ignite self-critiques on how to insert the political agencies of the ethnic other into the institutional power and representational apparatuses. The video documentary strategically unsettles the boundaries among performers, spectators, and video viewers via incessant displacement, subsequently destabilizing the colonizer/interpreter/spectator's established positions of gazing and identifying. Furthermore, during their two-year performance tour among metropolises of different continents, their hybrid presence of postcolonial savage confronts spectators in metropolitan centers with "uncanny collision" between "failed temporality of modernity" and "the time lag of postcolonial time" (Gikandi 642; elaborations ensue). Their interactions with spectators at various performance venues diversify loci of enunciations from whence postcolonial legacies are studied and reinscribed in the present, triggering some spectators to articulate the repressed memories and hidden histories of the ethnic subaltern in the course of individual experience.

During Fusco and G3mez-Pe3a's two-year performance tour, they were well-received by many friendly audience members and sympathizers across different cities despite frequent occurrences of disturbance mentioned above. For all the concerns on unsettling minor visitors, they observed that young people's reactions have been the most humane. Young children invariably stay closest to the cage; they would seek direct contact, offer to shake their hands, and try to catch their eyes and smile. Little girls gave Fusco barrettes for her hair and offered her food. Children often raised questions about the caged performers, prompting ethical discussions with their parents on racism and the treatment of indigenous peoples (Fusco 52).

Cross-racial identification also took place at the performance events. People of color who deemed, at least initially, the performance to be genuine exhibition at times expressed discomfort on account of their identification with the caged couple's predicament. In Washington and London, they made frequent references to slavery, the mistreatment of Native peoples and blacks as comparable and allegorical to their own history. Cross-racial identification was less common among white visitors, but in London an intoxicated ex-convict grabbed the bars and proclaimed with tears that he understood their plight because he was a "British Indian." He then removed his sweater and insisted that G3mez-Pe3a put it on, with which he complied (53). Many white Americans and Europeans expressed shock, surprise, and discomfort—for about five minutes. Some tended to express their chagrin to the zoo guards, usually operating under the assumption that they, the Amerindians, were being used. They often asked the zoo guards if the couple had agreed to remain encaged, after the affirmation

of which they continued with a stream of polite inquisitions on the couple's eating, working, and sexual habits (50, 52).

Many Latin Americans and Native Americans immediately recognized the symbolic significance of the piece, expressing solidarity with the caged natives. They analyzed articles in the cage for other audience members, and showed their approval to them by holding their hands as they posed for photographs. Despite the ostensibly ludicrous display, Native Americans as well as Latinos in the United States and Europe never criticized the hybridity of the cage environment and their costumes for being "unauthentic." One Pueblo elder from Arizona even considered the exhibition at Smithsonian more "real" than any other institutional documentation on Native peoples. "I see the faces of my grandchildren in that cage," he told a museum representative. Two Mexican visitors in England left a letter confessing that they too experienced engagement with every day spent in Europe. A Salvadoran man in Washington stayed with the caged couple for an extended period, pointing to the rubber heart suspended from the top of the cage, claiming, "That heart is my heart." Nevertheless, the reactions of Latin Americans differed according to class. Upper-class Latin American tourists in Spain and Washington D.C. voiced repulsion that their part of the world should be represented in such a debased manner (56).

The video documentary, *The Couple in the Cage*, is part of Fusco's art project to return the colonial gaze in the form and spirit of what she calls "reverse ethnography." Critic's responses to the video documentary vary. Many scenes in the video reveal the spectators' fascination and perplexity with the caged humans on display, consuming the satiric sight of postcolonial savage. Spectators gazing at the caged Latino bodies were framed as "closet colonists or dupes" (Taylor 1998: 169) while the video viewer remains outside the frame, scrutinizing both the performers and the spectators. The video viewer seems to occupy the position of an ethnographer, outside of and superior to the field of study. Taylor shows her unease with the video documentary. "While I personally love the video," she writes, "the hierarchies and epistemologies that the performance attacked are in danger of being reproduced" (Taylor 1998: 168-69). Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett recognizes the ambivalent and subversive strategies of the video in disrupting the unidirectional gaze and coherent narrative of colonial representational apparatuses. She writes, "What distinguishes *The Couple in the Cage* from a sermon is precisely . . . the impossibility of an appropriate reaction. There is no tenable audience reaction" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 178). In her opinion, the resistant strategy of the video, though sometimes futile, "shifts the locus of repudiation and admonishment from the 'other' to the practices of 'othering'" (177).

The “othering” process, to quote Homi Bhabha, is a process of domination through the disavowal of the other’s *différance*. In this regard, Fusco and G3mez-Pe3a’s performance events—including the two-year performance tour, video documentary, essay and the controversies they have ignited—is a “strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal” (Bhabha 1994: 112)<sup>3</sup> that traces the residual meaning and *différance* of colonial representation. Though at risk of recycling established stereotypes, Fusco and G3mez-Pe3a’s presentation of “transcultural postcolonial performativity” resonates to Bhabha’s the Third Space of representation, which negotiates for the colonized mass strategic loci of enunciation. The third space is the interstice as well as strategies of hybridity; it reverses the colonial disavowal, estranges colonial representation, and disrupts the coherence of colonialist discourse (36-39). At their live performances, Fusco and G3mez-Pe3a hybridize Latino savage with “subaltern in style” and “postcolonial chic” (Taylor 165) to co-present the deracinating past and the informed present, thwarting voyeuristic gazers’ attempt to stake the native others within a fixed reality through authentication and fetishization. Their hybrid performance recalls Bhabha’s notion of hybridity as a representational strategy. As Bhabha puts it, “Hybridity reverses the formal process of disavowal that the violent dislocation of the act of the colonization becomes the conditionality of colonial discourse” (Bhabha 1994: 114). The video documentary, *The Couple in the Cage*, frames the spectators as closeted colonialists peering at the live performance of the postcolonial savage, transfiguring video viewers into superior ethnographers or voyeuristic consumers. The incessant displacement of the gazing subject with the object of gaze violates the binary between aggression and victimization, threatening the colonizer/interpreter/spectator’s prescribed positions of gazing and identifying. Juxtaposing the live performance of the caged brown bodies with the footage and chronology of tortures as well as abusive displays since pre-Hispanic time, Fusco and G3mez-Pe3a confront the viewers with the violent history of colonial oppression and cultural conflicts experienced by Latinos and all discursive others in their everyday reality, subsequently retrieving the repressed *différance* of those presented as the “upseaking and unspeakable.” Tracing the residual mean-

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<sup>3</sup> Bhabha employs Derrida’s concept of *différance* to theorize the enunciation of the colonial context. *Différance* is a double notion of “difference” and “deferral.” The enunciation of colonial context is in an ambivalent process in which the dominant disavows the cultural difference and the temporal disjuncture which disrupts the coherence and haunts the boundary of the symbolic realm of colonialist discourse. On the other hand, the enunciation of the hybrid space is imbued with cultural liminality and Derridean supplementary space, which at once opens up and holds together “the pedagogical” that reiterates and consolidates the national narrative and “the performative” that evokes the emergence of cultural difference and minority discourse. See Homi K. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 35-39; 141-47.

ing and difference, the performers estrange the colonial representational apparatuses by infiltrating it with “the other history.” The estrangement allows “other ‘denied’ knowledge [to] enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority.” (114). The estrangement also gives rise to the rupture between colonialist demand for a stable system or reference and the necessary negation of the certitude in articulating new cultural demands for resistance. In the video documentary, *The Couple in the Cage*, and written document of “The Other History,” the enunciation locus shifts among the xenophobic racists, the voyeuristic tourists, the guilty elites, the hypocritical middle-class, the cross-racial sympathizers, and the Latino diaspora in metropolises who see their own grandchildren, their heart, and their own lives “within cage” made palpable by the confined Latino bodies. Shifting the locus and diversifying the enunciations, the performers initiate an ambivalent process of meaning-making, which deconstructs the unitary colonial representation and disrupts the coherence of colonialist discourse. The strategic negotiation of the Third Space, Bhabha writes, “makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code” (Bhabha 1994: 37).

### **Border Art, Cosmopolitanism, and Postcolonial Savage**

Fusco and G3mez-Pe3a’s strategic reversal of the dominant disavowal is imbued with the aesthetics and politics of what G3mez-Pe3a calls “border art.” The term “border” and “border crossing”—now utilized by Latino scholars and cultural practitioners as a progressive constituent—were first summoned to address the experiences of undocumented laborers from Mexico to the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. Since then, in Chicano arts and letters, the Borderlands have replaced Aztlán as the metaphor of choice to designate a communal space (Noriega 6). To contest the white hegemony and the Eurocentric multiculturalism, G3mez-Pe3a asserts, border artists should take into account “the spirit and pluralism coming from two decades’ concerted effort by a number of pioneering non-white artists, writers, and institutions, who approach the term as a cultural pluralism in which the various ethnic groups collaborate and dialogue with one another without having to sacrifice their particular identities to the Big Blob” (G3mez-Pe3a 52). With the spirit of contestation, G3mez-Pe3a suggests, the border artists may create experimental, syncretic, diverse, and complex border art to develop a progressive cultural constituency to which they belong. He identifies himself as “a deterritorialized Mexican/American artist

living in a permanent border experience”; he advocates the inside/out border art for subversive meaning making (Gómez-Peña 52).

As border artists claim to be radical, progressive, and counter-Eurocentric, they inherit their syncretic and experimental expressions from the arts across the southern border of the United States. Fusco and Gómez-Peña’s “reverse ethnography” of postcolonial savage was anticipated by the “anthropophagy” of Brazilian films. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam explain, anthropophagy is a film genre created by Brazilian modernists of the 1920s, which incorporates the trope of cannibalism and tropical images as elements fundamental to an insurgent aesthetics. It calls for a creative synthesis of European-avant-gardism and Brazilian “cannibalism,” invoking an “anthropophagic” that devours techniques and information of the superdeveloped countries to wrestle against colonial domination (Shohat and Stam 307). Ella Shohat and Robert Stam employ Artur Omar’s film, *Triste Tropico* (1974), to exemplify the genre and issue of anthropophagy. With its title alluding to Lévi-Strauss’ ethnographic memoir about Brazil, the film is a fictive anthropological documentary that triggers an evocative chain of cultural associations. In recourse to Lévi-Strauss’ discovery of European prejudices against the Tropics, the film’s protagonist travels from Brazil to Europe only to discover Brazil again, enacting a hallucinatory and parodic version of Brazilian *Heart of Darkness*. As the film’s trajectory parallels with that of numerous Brazilian intellectuals, it problematizes Brazil’s troubled cultural relationship with Europe in syncretic style and sardonic humor. With undergoing discussions on changes of etiquette inherent in transculturation under the pretext of all-isms: “Indianism,” “nationalism,” “modernism,” “Tropicalism,” the film reflects on the established notion of the “Tropics” being Europe’s exotic other (Shohat and Stam 311-12). The politics of reverse ethnography is also seen in Don Featherstone’s *Babakiueria* (1988). In this film, the white people are framed within aboriginal TV reportage. An aboriginal woman reporter introduces spectators to the “strange culture” of Whites. Mingling the discourses of anthropology and social welfare, she leads the camera to a “typical white family,” residing in a “typical White house,” in a “typical White ghetto” and practicing “typical White rituals:” a father who works and a mother who stays home; school children who study their culture on the A-bomb and ethos of “family ties” (they call their grandmother three times a year) (Shohat and Stam 328).

Fusco and Gómez-Peña’s performance is not only imbued with the syncretic form and contesting spirits from across the border, but it also highlights that US Latino theater has stridden forward from the narrow genre of ethnicity and the obsession with nationalism. The visibility of Latino theater coincided with the establishment of Teatro Campesino in California in 1965, which centered on

raising consciousness in constructing Latino ethnicity and cultural nationalism. Turning to the 1980s, US Latino theater proliferates because “nationalist and ethnic labels are no longer capable of completely representing identities that are plural, hybrid, and in flux” (Sandoval-Sánchez 123). Latino theater artists started to search for new forms that can offer models for agency and empowerment. In the 1990s, a new genre of U.S. Latino theater emerged, bringing to the audience new dramatic structure and perspectives as solo performance. The solo performers, among whom Fusco and G3mez-Pe3a are very influential, enact personal memoirs and speak for silenced experiences as well as lifestyles. They resist “English only,” address to border and hybrid identities, revisit and recover historical events, and revision history. Moreover, it becomes a trend for solo performers to poke fun at cultural icons and institutions, to revision traditional values and practices, and to perform subjectivity in process as part of claiming agency and empowerment. Their satire, irony, and humor make possible the dismantling of stereotypes by turning them inside out (Sandoval-Sanchez 123). Furthermore, Fusco and G3mez-Pe3a’s performance of self-incarceration and primitiveness anticipated Elia Arce’s (a Los Angeles-based Costa Rican feminist performers) *Stitches* (1993), in which she caged herself as part of an installation to enact “transculturated feminism” (Cheng 135-36;154-57). Self-incarceration and primitivism were also appropriated by a Cuban artist, Tania Bruguera, in *The Burden of Guilt* (1997-1999), a performance project touring Cuban Island and American cities during 1997 to 1999. In a syncretic, multi-sited installation, she performed hybrid “indigenous ritual” to interrogate the correlation between Cuban national consciousness and guilt over colonial brutality. Mapping the roots and routs between Africa and Cuba, this project is aimed at dismantling Cuban nationalism while envisioning “the Greater Cuba,” trajecting Pan-Latino identity (Mu3oz 403).

Seeing that the performance venues of Fusco and G3mez-Pe3a two-year performance tour are mostly in global metropolises across Europe and U.S.A., we may further question: what kind of visual and psychological impact have they brought to metropolitan spectators? What is the significance of performing postcolonial savage in global metropolises? Why and how does the hybridization of pre-Hispanic savage, subaltern style and postcolonial chic create the uncanny encounter for the spectators in modern metropolises? “The uncanny encounter,” Fusco claims, is aimed at catching the spectators off guard, making them “undergo their own process of reflection as to what they were seeing” (Fusco 57). Through performing postcolonial savage in the hybrid space of global metropolises, what kind of uncanny encounter can be carved out from the five-century-old drama of colonial discovery? Reminiscent of Butler’s performativity and Bhabha’s

Third Space representation, Fusco and G3mez-Pe3a's citational and iterative practices of the postcolonial savages set into motion the paradoxical and ambivalent process, in which the white spectatorship and Eurocentric chronology are disrupted by the uncanny return of the "vanishing" Third World; on the other hand, the unitary nationalist narrative of modern nation is estranged by the cacophony of ethnic subalterns struggling to speak of their hidden histories and silenced stories.

The performativity of postcolonial savage confronts the spectators in metropolitan center with the uncanny collision between the "failed temporality of modernity" and "the time lag of postcolonial time" (Gikandi 642), visualizing the collapsing of the third world into the first. Moreover, they create the uncanny presence of the "supplements"—or even field sites—for the "vanishing 'Third World.'" (Gikandi 646).<sup>4</sup> In the wake of globalization, more and more third-world immigrants, aliens, and expatriates flux into the metropolitan center of the first world under political or economic incentives, causing the cultural and ideological border to shift from the third-world periphery to the metropolitan center of modern nations. The uncanny presence of the postcolonial savage, or the third world immigrants and aliens not only causes a temporal disjuncture—the disruption of the temporality of the modern nation by the transnational, but also disrupts the existing narrative of modern nations that excludes the other to the periphery as "the third world" in consolidating the constituent boundary of "the first world." The uncanny encounter disrupts the linear and homogenizing narrative of Eurocentric modernity and colonialism, compelling a new way of imagining modern nations as the more complex transnational construction of

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<sup>4</sup> Gikandi uses the story of two New Guinean boys found dead in the cargo of an airplane flying from Guinea to Brussels to explicate the uncanny collision between the "failed temporality of modernity" and "the time lag of postcolonial time." Beside the dead bodies of two boys a letter was found, expressing their intention to smuggle to Brussels, "For the love of God, who has granted you all the experience, wealth, and power to ably construct and organize your continent. . . . We call upon your graciousness and solidarity to help us in Africa. Our problems are many: war, sickness, hunger, lack of education. . . . If you find that we have sacrificed our lives, it is because we suffer too much in Africa." In Gikandi's view, the tragedy of the two boys and the letter written by them make palpable that the key terms in the discourse of modernity—progress and reason or (ir)rationality—have an uncanny way of making their presence felt in the context of postcolonial globalism. The two Guinean boys, tethered to the myth of progress and killed by attempting to reach "there" to be like "you" (European), confuse the difference between the failed temporality of modernity and the time lag of postcolonial time. The "uncanny presence" of their dead bodies in Brussels also tragically disrupts the representation of the postcolonial subjects as simply an opposition between the teleology of progress and an atemporal irrationality; an opposition reinforcing the narrative of modern hegemony. Moreover, in my view, the uncanny presence of the dead bodies makes graphic the "ghostly" supplements for the vanishing "third world" as numerous postcolonial subjects—immigrants and aliens—flux into the metropolitan center of the first world. See Simon Gikandi, "Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality," 630, 642, 646.

landscape. In the new transnational narrative, the postcolonial savages or minorities have to negotiate in the interstices between what Bhabha calls “the teleology of progress” and “the timeless discourse of (ir)rationality” (Bhabha 1994: 141), moving the narrative from the nationalist boundary of modern nation to the transnational spheres of social life. Citing Appadurai’s example, Gikanti calls for a more nuanced trans/national imagination of the United States, “[The United States] is no longer the puppeteer of a world system of images, but is only one node of a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscape.”<sup>5</sup> Gikanti further indicates, “Originally conceived as the preserve of a world system of specific landscape (the nation), time now moves horizontally across shifting spheres of social life, breaking up the linear, homogenizing, and universalizing narrative of colonialism and modernity” (Gikanti 641).

The performativity of postcolonial savage also contributes to an alternative thinking on ethnicity and subaltern enunciation. The entry of postcolonial savages and new immigrants into the scopic and legal fields of modern nations not only threatens the unitary gaze of the dominant, but also challenges the notion of “the third world” and ethnicity inherent in colonialist discourse at the core. Elaborating on what he calls “new ethnicity,” Stuart Hall proposes a retrospective reading of ethnicity: instead of being treated as a fixed reality, a static past, and a mythic root, the past and the hidden histories should be rediscovered through memories, narrations, and desire in the course of individual experiences. The border between the first world and the third has not disappeared with decolonization; it is found instead in metropolitan settings where immigrant, aliens, displaced, or sexual minorities have to negotiate their liminal and hybrid subjectivities throughout the course of their lives. They have to carve a locus of enunciation to accommodate different ways of knowing as well as individual and collective expressions. The enunciation strategies entail telling stories of diverse (post)colonial experiences in search of diversified loci of enunciations from where (post)colonial legacies are studied and reinscribed in the present. Hall writes, “They wanted to talk about what the metropolises, what the cosmopolitan world, looked like to an ethnic. . . . They had to locate themselves somewhere, but they wanted to address problems that could no longer be contained within a narrow version of ethnicity. . . . They wanted to speak right across those boundaries, and across the frontier” (Hall 186).

For fear of double abstraction in time and space by the anonymous and impersonal forces of globalization, the postcolonial subaltern can speak through

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<sup>5</sup> See Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 39.



small yet intimate cultural practices of their most local moment. Hall notes, “I can’t speak of the world, but I can speak of my village. I can speak of my neighborhood. I can speak of my community” (184). Hall gives an example on how postcolonial subalterns diversify loci of enunciation via small cultural practices in everyday life. In a photography exhibition held by the Commonwealth Institute, people of different regions receive resources from the Commonwealth Institute and hence are able to use cameras to record, present and interpret their own lives and communities through photography. Though risk being mediated by institutional power, these previously “peripheral”—if not indistinguishable—mass of the Commonwealth produced stunning works of micro-histories that entrenched their denied individuality. To a certain extent, writes Hall, “the myth of unity, the unified identity of the Commonwealth, was exploded as forty different peoples with forty different histories, all located in a different way in relation to the uneven march of capital across the globe, harnessed at a certain point with the birth of the modern British empire” (Hall 185).

Another example was given by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett to illustrate how new discursive space for the subaltern can be delineated in such institutions as museum. Barbara notes that the Museum of the American Indian surprises its visitors not through making viewers complicit in a retrograde colonial scenario staged by the unruly “natives,” but by taking charge on the museum itself. A largely Native American staff controls what is shown and how. What its visitors discovered in the galleries silhouettes what the displayed objects mean to Native Americans today; its installations artfully resist the perils of re-affirming “authenticated” mythic past and biased stereotypes, offering its visitors an alternative history of American Indians that immediately diversifies itself from the previously controlled locus of enunciation. “While not without its own problems, this is how this museum addressed the historic foreclosures of ethnographic exhibitions that the collection itself exemplifies,” suggests Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (179).

Resonating to Hall’s cultural practices of new ethnicity and Bhabha’s strategic negotiation for the Third Space representation, Fusco and G3mez-Peña’s performativity of postcolonial savage recycles tropical tropes and images by tracing the difference and the residual meaning of colonial representation. Imbued with the contesting spirits of Latino border crosser and the experimental syncretic form of the inside/out border art, their hybrid performance turns their bodies into the cultural and social arena where ideas, myths, fictions, ideologies, and social models are produced, negotiated, and contested. The citational and iterative practices of the postcolonial performativity initiate an ambivalent process in which identities are dynamic and processual, always performed in all

their contradictions at given cultural and historical moments. Disrupting the unitary gaze of colonial theatricality and the linear, monolithic narrative of European modernity and colonialism, they carve diverse enunciation loci from whence border crossers endeavor to speak and envision the complex transnational communities.

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## 《籠中夫妻》的熱帶想像與 後殖民野蠻人

### 摘要

「熱帶型塑」一詞源自於李維史陀的《熱帶的憂鬱》，後來被拉美研究學者用於研究美國和拉丁美洲之間的文化接觸、翻譯、與移轉。本文將藉此探討拉美裔表演藝術家可可·傅斯可(Coco Fusco)以及古拉莫·葛梅皮納(Guillermo Gómez-Peña)的《籠中夫妻》(*The Couple in Cage*)，析論其如何運用「民族誌抵拒策略」，挪用熱帶想像中的種族刻板印象，來追溯那被殖民再現機制所壓抑的殘餘記憶和歷史文化差異。他們的表演包括為期兩年(1992-1993)，在三大洲的大都會的巡迴演出、影像紀錄以及針對表演事件紀錄、回顧、與反思的論文〈跨文化表演的另類歷史〉(“The Other History of Intercultural Performance”) (1995)。

本文將聯結茱蒂·巴特勒(Judith Butler)的操演(performativity)理論以及候米·巴巴(Homi K. Bhabha)的「第三空間再現」理論，衍生出新的分析理論模式，來探索《籠中夫妻》如何混雜前西班牙統治期的野蠻人、少數族裔、以及摩登後現代人的風格與形式，在現代都會中和觀眾詭異的邂逅？他們如何利用內／外翻轉的邊境藝術，把自己的身體轉化成社會與文化的論述場域，讓不同的觀念、意識形態、神話、敘事、言說，藉著表演事件而相互激盪、質疑、協商？後殖民野蠻人的表演與操演乃是雙重吊詭的過程，一方面擾亂歐美現代國家及殖民主義的帝國之眼及單一敘事；一方面也激發了少數族裔多元異聲的敘事以及跨國社群的庶民想像。

**關鍵字：**人拉美裔表演，拉美戲劇，後殖民，操演，第三空間，普世主義，熱帶，庶民，少數族裔，民族誌