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Coloniality of Power and Subalternity

WALTER D. MIGNOLO

In the fall of 1996 Ranajit Guha was invited to Houston to dialogue with members of the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group, where he read the essay published in this volume. At the time of Guha's visit, he was familiar with the "Founding Statement" and with *Postmodernism in Latin America*, the volume of *boundary 2* edited by John Beverley, José Oviedo, and Michael Aronna in which it was included. On this ground he established, first, a dialogue between South Asian and Latin American subaltern studies projects, highlighting "postmodernism" as portrayed in the special issue of *boundary 2*. Attempting to identify the common grounds of the two projects, Guha observed that it is not territoriality but temporality that connects South Asian and Latin American projects. By "temporality" he means that "collapsing of local and global times — the time of the Naxalbari uprising in India and that of the Cultural Revolution in China, the time of the Nicaraguan elections and that of the fall of the Berlin Wall — is of course one of the most salient features of capital's 'self-realization process in the course of which it strives to annihilate space with time, as Marx has argued" (Guha, this volume).

It is indeed interesting that Guha framed "temporality" as "modernity," situated modernity in the second half of the eighteenth century, and highlighted Immanuel Kant's "What is Enlightenment?" Guha's reference to Michel Foucault's interpretation of Kant's classical piece allowed him to frame temporality in two extremes, modernity and postmodernity. Reflecting on the Latin American encounter with postmodernism as it is explored in the special issue of *boundary 2* already mentioned, Guha noted that this engagement is "displayed clearly enough to make it stand well apart from similar engagements such as the Anglo-European and South Asian ones" (emphasis added). Guha made a reference to India's "two hundred years of solitude" and to the fact that coloniality and postcoloniality, rather than modernity and postmodernity, are the issues at stake. This is precisely the point I would like to expand on in this belated dialogue with Guha's statement.

My intention here is two-fold. The first is to intervene in and contribute to a

conversation between both projects.¹ The second is to bring a third party into the conversation, the contribution of Latin American scholars and intellectuals who, since the 1970s, have been reflecting on coloniality, capitalism, modernity, and, indirectly, on subalternity in the Americas.² It is not my intention to establish priorities such as who was first and who deserves the honor of first arrival. On the contrary, I want to emphasize that if this dialogue was not established before (say, in the early 1980s), it was due to the historical structure of modernity/coloniality and the geopolitics of knowledge.

Latin American and South Asian scholars looked toward Europe for the "source" of knowledge, simultaneously ignoring each other or assuming that there was nothing to be learned from each other beyond the epistemic tradition of Western modernity. Last, but not least, by bringing together coloniality of power and subalternity, two particular responses to two particular colonial histories, my intention is to underline epistemic diversity and to keep on arguing for diversity as a universal project beyond the disciplinary epistemic legacies of North Atlantic modernity and the ideological underpinnings of area studies. This argument is also compelling at present with the logic of area studies being reproduced and "applied" to Latino/a studies.³

Subalternity and Coloniality in British India

Guha's observation that "engagements such as the Anglo-European and South Asian" with postmodernity stand well apart from those of the Latin-European and South American deserves some attention. The comparison is between British India and Spanish America, or, if you prefer, between Anglo India and Latin America. He characterizes the temporality of the former (Anglo-European and South Asian) as "postcolonial" and underlines three "salient aspects of modernity's intersection with colonialism":

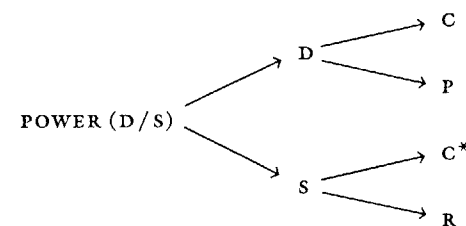
First, that the phenomenon of post-Enlightenment colonialism is *constitutive* of and presupposed in modernity even if it is not always explicitly acknowledged to be so; secondly, that postmodernism as a critique can never be adequate to itself unless it takes colonialism into account as a historic barrier that reason can never cross; thirdly, that the colonial experience has outlived decolonization and continues to be related significantly to the concerns of our time. (Guha, this volume)

I would like, first, to support Guha's remarks by bringing similar perspectives on modernity/coloniality to the foreground, and second, to depart from the historical limits he set in the eighteenth century. The issues implied in Guha's remarks are not explicitly mentioned in the "Founding Statement" or reflected upon in Beverley et al.; however, such perspectives have been signifi-

cantly debated in Latin America at least since the 1970s. The following observations are aimed at explaining two basic assumptions on which these debates emerged and stand (still today) in harmony with the project of the South Asian Subaltern Studies Collective. First, coloniality is constitutive of modernity, and modernity/coloniality should be located in the sixteenth century with the emergence of the Atlantic circuit and the consolidation of capitalism; second, subalternity is not only a question of social classes, but is instead a larger issue embedded in the coloniality of power and in the formation of the modern/colonial world-system; third, although “colonialism” or “colonial periods” refers to specific historical stages of coloniality, coloniality of power is intrinsic to modernity, and, consequently, coloniality at large goes beyond decolonization and nation building: coloniality is the machine that reproduces subalternity today in the form of global coloniality in the network society.

The links between subalternity and coloniality have been explored in great detail in one of Guha’s classic works, “Dominance without Hegemony and Its Historiography.” It’s clear in his argument that subalternity is not only a question of a subordinate class within an industrial country, but of subordinated social organizations and histories within the interstate structure of power, such as that between England and India until 1947. Guha’s opening sentences reveal that subalternity and the colonial difference presuppose each other: “There was one Indian battle that Britain never won. It was a battle for appropriation of the Indian past. It began with the East India Company’s accession to *diwani* in 1765” (210). He continues: “A colonialist knowledge, its function was to erect that past as a pedestal on which the triumphs and glories of the colonizers and their instrument, the colonial state, could be displayed to best advantage. Indian history, assimilated to the history of Great Britain, would henceforth be used as a comprehensive measure of difference between the peoples of these two countries. Politically that difference was spelt out as one between rulers and the ruled” (211). Colonialism under the British Empire went together with a particular stage of capitalism, no longer mercantile capitalism as in the sixteenth century, but industrial capitalism. Guha is here making three interrelated points: one about colonialism, one about capitalism, and the third about intellectual and academic critiques (in his case, historiography) of hegemony and domination.

“Coloniality of power” is not a term used by Guha but one introduced by Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano (1992, 1997a, 1997b). My aim is to find the point of articulation between coloniality of power and Guha’s conceptualization of power as a complex matrix of Dominance (D) by Coercion (C) and by Persuasion (P) and of Subordination (S) by Collaboration (C*) and by Resistance (R). Let’s remember the general configuration of power as described by Guha in the following matrix:



Crucial in Guha’s proposal is the double articulation of the matrix. One level is the interstate system primed by capitalism and colonial expansion. The second level is the internal situation in colonial India once the interstate system is put in place through colonial dominance. The matrix describes a general structure of power that can be implemented to understand both England and India before colonialism as well as British dominance over India during the colonial period. Guha uses the word “paradigm” (instead of “cosmology” or “worldview”) to describe two kind of discourses articulated in the colonial structure of power (or, if you prefer, articulated by the coloniality of power). Rather than a contact zone, what we have here is the violence of border(lands).

The English “idiom” of “Improvement” and the Indian “idiom” of “*Danda*” which was central to all indigenous notions of dominance) intersect. “Improvement” carries all the weight, and the belief in that progress and “improvement” was the point of arrival *for* India. The point of arrival itself was enunciated *from* England. “*Danda*” Guha explains, instead “emphasizes force and fear as the fundamental principles of politics. The source and foundation of royal authority, *Danda* is regarded as the manifestation of divine will in the affairs of the state” (1989: 238). The idiom of “improvement” was employed by British *indigenous* government (in England) as well as by the British *foreign* government (in India). It was supposed to be implemented in a *foreign* country as a political strategy to Persuade (P) the *indigenous* elite (in the country where the British were *foreign*) “to ‘attach’ themselves to the colonial regime” (242).

If, then, there were two independent idioms to articulate power and dominance (*danda* and improvement), coloniality of power emerged at the moment in which capitalism and colonial expansion acquired the face of “improvement” as the building block of the idiom of modernization, civilizing mission, and the like. However, while *danda* was the paradigm of dominance in India before British colonialism, improvement was the paradigm of dominance in England, also before colonialism. It was introduced by the bourgeoisie to detach itself from the feudal order and to introduce a new form of domination of subaltern communities in England. Subalternity, in this argu-

ment, becomes a *connector* of different local histories and structures of domination in the modern/colonial world-system, which is further complicated by the double articulation of the structure of power under colonial regimes. In the modern/colonial world, however, subalternity is not only a question that affects the relationship between sectors of the civil society and the state, but it is also ingrained in the interstate system structured by the coloniality of power.

Guha's focus on the conflictive "conversation" between two paradigms clearly locates subalternity in the hierarchical structure of the interstate system. He goes through a detailed philological work in order to explain the idioms of Improvement and Order in one paradigm and of Dharma and Danda in the other. However, there is a moment of his analysis in which the "temporalization" in the encounter and the conflict between the two paradigms become the focus. Allow me to transcribe the two paradigms and the constituent elements organized by Guha in order to understand his point about "temporalization" (see Guha 1989: 271):

Paradigms		
Constituent elements	Contemporary, British, liberal	Precolonial, Indian, semifeudal
C	Order	Danda
P	Improvement	Dharma
C*	Obedience	Bhakti
R	Rightful Dissent	Dharmic Protest

I will not comment here on the dangers of reproducing British historiographic chronology when contrasting contemporary British India with precolonial India. But it is important to remember that there was both a precolonial and feudal England that the bourgeois revolution was attempting to overcome, as there was a precolonial India that was overtaken by the British bourgeoisie that overcame feudalism in a precolonial England. In other words, two independent local histories were intercrossed and articulated by coloniality of power.

Guha's effort to understand the relationships between D and S under interstate colonial structures in tension, and the conflicts between two paradigms (or cosmologies) that are hegemonic in each of the states in question, is the pillar of his argument. The conditions of Dominance and Subordination are, for Guha, "*specific and adequate to the conditions of colonialism* an ensemble of overdetermining effects" that he explains through Lacan's concept of "double meaning" (see Guha 1989: 271). Guha describes double meaning as the "pro-

cess of condensation and displacement by which the ideological moments of social contradictions in pre-colonial India and modern England [also pre-colonial] were fused with those of the living contradictions of colonial rule to structure the relation D/S" (ibid.).

[What is of interest for my argument is the fact that] one could explain the same phenomenon from a subaltern perspective (instead of from a "scientific" one) by invoking W. E. B. Du Bois's "double consciousness" (1990: 8–9) and finding the parallels between double consciousness in the Afro-American experiences and double consciousness in British India. The explanatory power of "double consciousness" instead of "double meaning" would have supported and strengthened the argument that British colonialism in India was dominance without hegemony. Why? Because "double consciousness" carries in and with it the weight of the colonial experience, of which "double meaning" is deprived. "Double meaning" carries the weight of the bourgeois individual experience in nineteenth-century Europe. However, and as I said before, the geopolitics of knowledge (and the hegemony of certain types of knowledge) prevented the dialogue between different experiences of coloniality as both subalternity and double consciousness were mediated by the "common ground" provided by European production of knowledge, theories, and disciplinary fields. None of the "constituent elements" of the diagram (C, P, C*, and R) remain the same: "improvement" comes to mean something else, and "dharma" also changes its meaning: "Thus C as an element of D/S is not identical with the notion of Order in the lexicon of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British politics nor with the notion of Danda in that of classical Hindu polity, although its formation owes much to both. Again, P, though a product of the interaction of Improvement and Dharma, is characterized by properties only some of which it shares with those idioms, while the rest are uniquely its own. And so for each element" (Guha 1989: 271).

Guha's explanation of "double meaning" in each of the "constituent elements" introduces the perspective of the observer, while a concept such as Du Bois's "double consciousness" allows, instead, for an understanding of double meaning from the perspective of the colonial subaltern who can understand and has to deal with both improvement and dharma. What remains to be underlined here is that double consciousness is unthinkable from the hegemonic perspective of Western epistemology, while double meaning is acceptable as a "scientific" conceptualization. However, from a subaltern perspective, double consciousness could be articulated in various forms. Indian liberals (in Guha's terminology) will embrace improvement, while Indian nationalists will reconstitute and embrace dharma. The first proposes assimilation; the second, resistance.

There is a third possibility, however, that I call "border thinking" or "border

epistemology,” and its outcome “critical assimilation.” The assimilation of improvement from the perspective of dharma means a radical transformation of the former from the perspective of the latter, and the transformation of the latter because of the unavoidable presence of the former. This is, in the last analysis, what Du Bois’s “double consciousness” implied: a critical assimilation to Anglo hegemonic culture from and into the perspective of the Black Soul.³ Because double consciousness is a necessary outcome of colonial subalternity, it is precisely why colonialism in India, and everywhere else, was dominance without hegemony: a dominance that could never colonize the past. (The present planetary order mapped by the exercise of the coloniality of power and subalternity in the interstate system requires diversality (diversity as a universal project) as a project for the future. The Zapatistas’ dictum “Because we are all equal we have the right to the difference” could be taken as the platform for a diversal or pluriversal project that takes the place of the existing abstract universals in which coloniality of power and colonial subalternity have been engrained.)

This line of argument explains, also, that British historians operated (and they could hardly have done otherwise) on a “single consciousness,” the consciousness of improvement and order (and presupposed the expansion of British universal assumptions). Evaluating British historiography in India, Guha suggests: “The strategy of the Cambridge approach is to credit that mediation with complete success in this regard and represent the colonized subject’s relation to the colonizer as one in which C* triumphed effectively over R. In other words, *it is a strategy aimed at characterizing colonialism as a hegemonic dominance*” (1989: 296).

British colonial, as well as Marxist, historiography (exemplified in Guha’s article with the works of David Wasbrook) “surgically removed the subaltern domain” (Guha 1989: 305). Consequently, “all initiative other than what emanates from the colonizers and their collaborators strictly ruled out, all elements of resistance meticulously expelled from its political processes, *colonialism emerges from this historiography as endowed with a hegemony which was denied to it by history*” (ibid.). And he concludes this statement by observing that “the Cambridge approach achieves this feat by an act of bad faith — by writing up Indian history as a ‘portion’ of the British History” (ibid.).

The bottom line of Guha’s argument is that subalternity is inextricably linked to coloniality. And this was not the case in Gramsci’s original conceptualization of subalternity in the context of class hierarchy in Europe under industrial capitalism. Guha’s contribution was to link subalternity to coloniality and to redefine it as a structure of power in the (modern/colonial) interstate system. Capitalism and coloniality, as Guha’s argument amply demonstrates, have a different (although complementary) articulation than cap-

italism and modernity. Future conversations between the South Asian and Latin American Subaltern Studies groups should be more attentive to the similarities-in-difference that are engraved in a singular local histories of modernity/coloniality.

Coloniality is of the essence in the modern/colonial trajectory whose history is the history of Latin America and the history that *made* Latin America, although it has been hidden from view through two hundred years of nation building and national ideology. The two hundred years of (colonial) solitude that Guha refers to for British India have been five hundred years of solitude for Ibero America and the Caribbean. The different temporalities of colonial British India and Ibero America and the Caribbean makes the conversation between scholars in both groups (and between them and intellectuals and scholars in Latin America) difficult but at the same time exciting. India was falling under British administration approximately at the time that the British were expelled from the River Plate in South America. Nation building, in the Americas and up to World War II, coexisted with the British Empire’s dominance in Asia and Africa.

In the period after World War II, post-partition India had to solve the problems presented by decolonization (and the South Asian Subaltern Studies Collective emerged as a consequence of such process), while in Latin America the problems unfolded around modernization and development (roughly 1950–1970), but also with the wave of dictatorships during the period in which transnational corporations began to rise (roughly 1970–1990). If this is the “history” of the two regions, the “encounter” between South Asian and Latin American Subaltern Studies belongs to a post-Cold-War period. Interestingly enough, the “Founding Statement” was published in 1992, the year of the conflictive celebration of the Spanish “discovery” of America. And that coincidence allows me to bring into the conversation the concerns of and the contributions made by those in Latin America who since the seventies have been attentive to coloniality, Eurocentrism, and the rise of U.S. imperialism.

Coloniality and Subalternity in Latin America

To enlarge the scope of the conversations between Latin American intellectuals and South Asian and Latin American Subaltern Studies groups let me now change the scenario slightly. During the 1970s when Ranajit Guha and various collaborators were formulating the South Asian project in response to the postcolonial situation in India and South Asia, a similar set of concerns was being attended by Latin American intellectuals. In Latin America what needed attention was not a short-lived postcolonial condition, as in India, but

the failures—after more than 150 years of decolonization—of development and modernization coupled with the critical situation prompted by the Cuban Revolution and the consequent reaction of the U.S. government. There was a chronological coincidence between the New Left in England and in Latin America, particularly in Argentina. The concerns with decolonization that prompted the emergence of South Asian subaltern studies were parallel to those that in Latin America were expressed through dependency theory, philosophy of liberation, internal colonialism, and the dialogue between Latin American and African philosophers, historians, and sociologists working on decolonization.⁴ The Cold War and the Cuban Revolution added an important, complex element once the initial enthusiasm of the Left for the decolonization of Cuba was converted into the suspicions that it was a recolonization under a different ideology of planetary expansion.

Thus, the intellectual parallelisms shall be complemented with the historical parallelisms between the five hundred years of coloniality in Latin America and the Caribbean and the two hundred years in British India. In the Americas, the year 1992 (more so in Latin America and the Caribbean) was a significant date from both the perspective of the state as well as from the perspective of the indigenous population. The “official story” commemorated the “discovery,” while the indigenous population denounced five hundred years of colonization. Somewhat in the middle, Creole and immigrant intellectuals expressed their solidarity with anticolonial manifestations, although with a certain distance and caution toward a historical event that did not have (in the eyes of most of them) any bearing in an ascending neoliberal society and the demise of the nation-state.

For Guha, and in general for the South Asian Subaltern Studies group, there was no choice but to locate the “beginning” of coloniality in the emergence of British India. For Latin American intellectuals interested in understanding coloniality and coloniality of power embedded in nation building, there was no choice but to locate the “beginning” in the emergence of Spanish (and later on Latin) America. It is not by coincidence that Anibal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein coauthored an article titled “Americanness as a concept, or the Americas in the Modern World-System” (1992). While Guha emphasized (on the experience of British colonialism in India) the “universalizing tendency of capital and its limitations” (1989: 222) and referred to colonialism as “the failure of the universalist project” (272), Quijano and Wallerstein emphasized (based on the experience of Ibero colonialism in the Americas) the emergence and consolidation of capitalism and of colonialism. In the sixteenth century the universalist project was not so much a bourgeois as it was a Christian one. The “model,” so to speak, was already in place when Britain enacted and transformed it into the colonization of India.

In the parallels I am exploring between the 1970s and 1990s, it should be remembered that Wallerstein’s first volume on the modern world-system was published in 1974. This publication was a landmark on several fronts. The ones I am here interested in are those that connect with the British and Latin American New Left, and those that locate the “beginning” of modernity/coloniality in the sixteenth century with the emergence of the Atlantic commercial circuit and the “discovery” of America. Let’s remember how Quijano and Wallerstein traced the interrelations between capitalism, coloniality and modernity: “The modern world-system was born in the long sixteenth century. The Americas as a geosocial construct were born in the long sixteenth century. The creation of this geosocial entity, the Americas, was the constitute act of the modern world-system. *The Americas were not incorporated into an already existing capitalist world economy. There could not have been a capitalist world economy without the Americas*” (549).

The Americas were conceived as the “New World,” Quijano and Wallerstein state, because the New World became “the pattern, the model, of the entire world-system” (550). They describe a four-fold pattern; namely, coloniality, ethnicity, racism, and “newness” itself. Coloniality is, for Quijano and Wallerstein, something that transcends the particularities of historical colonialism and that does not vanish with independence or decolonization. Coloniality is also embedded in national formation because, in their thesis, coloniality is constitutive of modernity and, therefore, of the modern/colonial world-system. The difference is that for Guha modernity/coloniality is located in the eighteenth century, and for Quijano and Wallerstein in the sixteenth century.⁵ British capitalism and colonial expansion to India under the banner of the civilizing mission that Guha explored in “Dominance without Hegemony” is, for Quijano and Wallerstein, a variation of the pattern of the modern/colonial world articulated in the sixteenth century.

Latin American independence, obtained during the same period that Britain was colonizing India, is another variation of coloniality of power in the formation and transformation of the modern/colonial world-system. I do not have time here to go into the four aspects discussed by Quijano and Wallerstein, even less to discuss some shortcomings of their formulation. I will limit myself to what I consider relevant for a triangular discussion between the project of some Latin American scholars and intellectuals, Latin (and Latin/o/a American) subaltern studies in the United States, and the South Asian Subaltern Studies group. Let’s then focus on coloniality:

Coloniality was an essential element in the integration of the interstate system, creating not only a ranking order but also a set of rules for the interactions of states with each other. *Thus it was that the very efforts of those*

at the bottom of the rank order to overcome their low ranking served in many ways to secure the ranks further. The administrative boundaries established by the colonial authorities had had a certain fluidity in that, from the perspective of the metropole, the essential boundary line was that of the empire vis-à-vis other metropolitan empires. It was decolonization that fixed the stateness of the decolonized states. Spanish viceroyalty were carved up in the process of the war of independence to yield, more or less, the states we know today. (Quijano and Wallerstein, 551)

Thus, coloniality has been explored and expanded (chiefly by Quijano) in order to grasp a dimension that has been left in the dark in the conceptualization of the modern world-system as well as, in a parallel line of reflections, by discussion and debates on modernity and postmodernity. Coloniality is, for Quijano (as well as, and independently, for Guha) not only constitutive of modernity but also a locus of enunciation defined by the epistemic colonial difference. As such, it transverses the end of the first wave of decolonization and nation building (for example, the decolonization from England and the formation of the United States, Haiti's independence from France, and Latin American Iberian colonies' from Spain and Portugal). Nation building cannot be detached from, and it is indeed a particular stage of, the modern/colonial world. From the perspective of coloniality nation building is simply a new phase of modernity/coloniality and not the end of colonialism. "Internal colonialism," therefore, was a necessary concept introduced to describe and explain, precisely, the colonial dimension of modern nation building after decolonization, whether in the first stage (late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries) or second stage (after World War II) of decolonization. In other words, decolonization and nation building became a new form of articulation of the coloniality of power in the Americas (in the nineteenth century) and in Asia and Africa (in the second half of the twentieth century).

Quijano's conception of coloniality of power links race, labor, and epistemology. First of all, the pattern of colonial domination and labor in the sixteenth century presupposed, for Quijano, the concept of "race." This key concept allowed for a social classification and the creation of new identities around the planet that were established as historically necessary permanent relations and not as a justification for the control and exploitation of labor (see Quijano 1997a: 29). "Indians" and "blacks" became two overarching categories that displaced and obscured the historical and ethnic diversity of people inhabiting the Americas and those transported from Africa to the Americas. Such a distribution of social identities (to which should be added the background of the classification of Jews and Moors in the Iberian Peninsula) was, for Quijano, the foundational move for the classification of the population in

the Western Hemisphere. (And of the planet if we consider the Moors and the Jews and, later on, the emergence of "orientalism.") Epistemology was endowed with the power to organize the planet by identifying people with territories and differentiating Europe from the other three continents (according to the four continents [imaginary] since the sixteenth century). Epistemology was endowed, indeed, with the coloniality of power (see Quijano 1997a: 29–31).

It should be observed, in passing, that the word "race" did not exist in the sixteenth century and that the classification of people was largely based on religion. However, the underlying principle was racial. "Purity of blood," which served to establish the distinction between Christians, Moors, and Jews, was indeed religious but based on biological "evidence." In the nineteenth century, when science replaced religion, racial classification was no longer based on blood mixture but on skin color. Beyond the changing faces of racial configurations, the underlying principle of the modern/colonial world for the classification of people in epistemic hierarchies is racial in the sense that it is based on physical features, whether blood or skin, linked to either religious or national communities.

The alliance between Quijano and Wallerstein—in spite of their differences—is not surprising. It is well known that Wallerstein's concept of the modern world-system owes much to the work of Fernand Braudel's history of the Mediterranean in the sixteenth century, while his notion of center-periphery owes much to Argentinean economist Raul Prebisch (reflecting on the limits of modernization in the Third World) and to dependency theory advanced by Brazilian sociologists Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto (see Wallerstein 1979: 69–94; Grosfogel 1997). However, while Wallerstein proposed a new map of the modern world as a system, he perceived colonialism but not coloniality.

Colonialism ended with independence (in Latin America, Asia, or Africa), but not coloniality. And this is precisely the trust of Quijano's contribution. The "idiom" or the "paradigm" (to borrow Guha's terms) of coloniality makes visible both the geopolitics of knowledge from colonial perspectives and the strength of critical reflections on modernity from the perspective of coloniality. Although these reflections were happening simultaneously in the 1970s, the hegemonic power of modern epistemology managed to keep them hidden from each other. Poststructuralism and postmodernity functioned as orange cones blocking the road that connected Southeast Asia with South America. Furthermore, and because of the hegemonic power of modern epistemology, Indian and Peruvian intellectuals had their backs to the Pacific and were looking toward France, England, and Germany.

The identification of the sixteenth century as the beginning of moder-

nity/coloniality is not only a narrative from the social sciences in both their northern (Wallerstein) and southern (Quijano) versions, but something that is ingrained in a different colonial experience. Indigenous movements also have been emphasizing, lately, the five hundred years of colonization. The first paragraph of the Zapatistas' first declaration from the Lacandón jungle is, in a nutshell, a cartography of coloniality of power, through nation building, and subalternity in the interstate modern/colonial world:

We are a product of 500 years of struggle: first against slavery, then during the War of Independence against Spain, then to avoid being absorbed by North American imperialism, then to promulgate our constitution and expel the French empire from our soil; later the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz denied us the just application of the Reform laws and the people rebelled and leaders like Villa and Zapata emerged, poor men just like us. We have been denied by our rulers the most elemental conditions of life, so they can use us as cannon fodder and pillage the wealth of our country. They don't care we have nothing, absolutely nothing, not even a roof over our heads, no land, no work, no health care, no food or education. Nor are we able to freely and democratically elect our political representatives, nor is there independence from foreigners, nor is there peace or justice for ourselves and our children. (García de León, 33–36)

It would not be surprising to find the “Declaration from the Lacandon Jungle” in the second edition of *Postmodernism in Latin America* (Beverley et al.). Indeed, one can take this declaration as a second “Founding Statement,” particularly because it is a historical, theoretical, and political statement coming from people in a subaltern position that breaks away from the directionality of studying or theorizing subalternity in academia only. The Zapatistas have shown that the subaltern may not be able to speak, but they are certainly able and willing to think.

I do not have time to pursue this line of reasoning here, which I have done elsewhere (Mignolo 1997). I will instead close this section by going back to the relevance of the sixteenth century in thinking modernity/coloniality from Latin America, to which, of course, the Zapatista movement is no exception. Argentinean Enrique Dussel, a key figure of philosophy of liberation, could help in underlining the geopolitical and interdisciplinary perspectives of colonial expansion and of the link between capitalism and knowledge. I am also particularly interested in those cases in which power and subordination connect two ethos, cosmologies, or paradigms (in Guha's terminology). Knowledge becomes, on one side of the spectrum, part of the social reality that shall be improved, managed, or domesticated. Dussel conceptualized the formation of the Eurocentric paradigm in the early 1970s, and his version of libera-

tion philosophy very much presupposed a geopolitics of knowledge that now we can understand within Guha's matrix of P(ower)/S(ubordination).

Let's now move from the sociohistorical perspective on coloniality introduced by Quijano to the philosophical critique of modernity developed by Dussel. When Dussel published *Philosophy of Liberation* in 1977, he reflected on “modern European philosophy” in the following terms:

Beginning with the fourteenth century, the Portuguese and then the Spanish began to control the North Atlantic (which from the end of the fifteenth century until today will be the center of history). Spain and Portugal opened Europe to the west; Russia will do it to the east. In the sixteenth century Spain discovered the Pacific to the west and Russia did the same to the east. Now the Arab world is enclosed and loses the centrality it had exercised for almost a thousand years. Later Spain and Portugal will give way to the British Empire. Now Europe is the center. From the experience of this centrality gained by the word and by power, Europe began to consider itself the archetypal foundational “I.” (8)

More recently, Dussel has rearticulated his early conceptualization of the geopolitics of knowledge and power in a slightly different but consistent frame: “Two opposing paradigms, the Eurocentric and the planetary, characterize the question of modernity” (1998: 3). The first paradigm was constructed from a Eurocentric horizon. Modernity in this paradigm was conceived as exclusively a European phenomenon. The second paradigm instead underlines the planetary contribution to modernity and, therefore, “conceptualizes modernity as the culture of the *center* of the world-system, of the first world-system, through the incorporation of Amerindia as a result of the *management* of this centrality. In other words, European modernity is not an *independent*, autopoietic, self-referential system, but instead is *part* of a world-system: in fact, its center” (4). Anyone familiar with some of the writing of the South Asian Subaltern Studies group would soon realize the parallelisms of their motivations and goals with the project of philosophy of liberation and decolonization of knowledge in Quijano and Fals Borda.

Gender and Internal Colonialism

The recent translation into Spanish (and in Bolivia) of a collection of articles by members of the South Asian Studies group made visible another story that originated in the 1970s (see Rivera Cusicanqui and Barragán). This story has coloniality also as a main character in the colonial horizon of modernity. In the late 1960s and early 1970s a discussion about the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Latin America occupied several pages and a considerable amount

of energy. Two classic examples were the differing points of view advanced by sociologist Andre Gunder Frank on the transition from feudalism to capitalism, and its refutation by Argentinean philosopher Ernesto Laclau (see also Stern). On the other hand, the intervention of Argentine economic historians Enrique Tandeter, Sempat Assadurian, and Carlos Garavaglia placed the debate in a different domain, that of colonialism (see Rivera Cusicanqui and Barragán; Larson). As Argentine historians studying the exploitation of the silver mines in Potosí (Bolivia), they were looking toward the Andes instead of toward Europe, as were Frank and Laclau.

The economic historians saw a different story: not the replica of Western linear macronarratives universalizing feudalism and capitalism, but the story of colonialism and the emergence of the Atlantic commercial circuit and the consolidation of capitalism. The silver mines of Potosí were not just one mine among many. The only other comparable silver mine was in Zacatecas, Mexico. It was, indeed, one of the major sources of silver for Europe. The reaches of the Indies contributed to the dissolution of feudalism in Europe, to engrossing the reservoir of European countries north of the Pyrenees and to the emergence of Holland and England as capitalist/colonialist leading countries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, respectively (Arrighi 1994). However, if the silver mines of Potosí contributed to the dissolution of feudalism in Europe and the transition to capitalism, that was not the case in the Andes. There was no room in the Andes for a transition from feudalism to capitalism since there was no feudalism to be overcome by the emergence of the European bourgeoisie. The Incas and the Aztecs were not living in the Middle Ages before the arrival of the Spaniards! The Middle Ages were an invention of the Renaissance and of Western modernity, and not a planetary reality.

The economic historians revealed, on one hand, the expanding noncapitalistic and nonmarket economy of Inca social organization, and on the other, that there was a population (elite and masses) that had to make the transition from an economy based on reciprocity to an economy based on pillage and individualism; that is, a transition to a market economy with all the consequences this transition implied.⁶ The complexities that Guha described in the structure P/S could be rehearsed here, although in a different kind of colonial domination that was inventing itself in the process of its emergence. The emergence of the modern/colonial world-system in the sixteenth century, and the articulation of its matrix, led the foundations of modernity/coloniality of which the British Empire in India is nothing less than the adaptation of previous patterns put in place in the sixteenth century.

Parallel to the contribution made by Argentine historians, two Mexican sociologists, Pablo González Casanova and Rodolfo Stavenhagen, introduced the notion of “internal colonialism” in the debate on national development.

The social sciences faced therein the conflict that, later on, would be faced by subaltern historiography in India by confronting the limits and tensions between coloniality, nation building, and the disciplines. “Internal colonialism” not only underlined the relevance of colonialism embedded in the nation state but also modified the taken-for-granted idea that independence of Spanish American countries in the nineteenth century was the end of colonialism. It may have been the end of the colonial period (like 1947 was for India), but it was not the end of coloniality and of coloniality of power. The Creole elite, of Spanish descent, obtained political independence from Spain but entered a process of nation building economically dependent on new ascending colonialism, chiefly by England during the nineteenth century and increasingly the United States during the twentieth century. Nation building, in other words, reproduced the colonial rules vis-à-vis the indigenous population and concentrated the power in the Creole elite.

The very existence of a Creole elite in the Americas that went through the process of decolonization from European colonial powers (approximately between 1776 and 1831) is one of the crucial differences between coloniality in India and in the Americas. Decolonization in the Americas was in the hands of Creoles (Anglo, African, and Iberian), while in India it was in the hands of the indigenous population. The diverse Creole elite in the Americas (of Anglo-Saxon descent in the U.S. decolonization from England; of African descent in Haiti’s decolonization from France; and of Iberian descent in Latin America decolonization from Spain and Portugal) reproduced coloniality of power in the form of internal colonialism. Contrary to what happened in India, the indigenous population in the Americas was not in a position to accomplish the type of “collaboration” Guha analyzed for the indigenous population in India in complicity with the officers of the British Empire (240–245). Today “internal colonialism” may sound out of place. The fact that globalization is undermining state sovereignty and transnational corporations by passing frontier regulations does not mean, necessarily, that internal colonialism is no longer in force. First of all, it is important to understand the differences between nation-states in Europe and in the Third World. And second, it should be rethought in terms of the new forms of coloniality in a global and transnational world.

Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui has inscribed her work since the mid-1980s at the intersection of coloniality and internal colonialism. As founder of the Taller de Historia Oral, Rivera Cusicanqui worked with indigenous scholars and intellectuals, always emphasizing coloniality over modernity or, if you wish, the fact that “peripheral” modernities in the modern/colonial world have been and are “colonial” modernities. Her crucial essays on the epistemological potential of oral history and its relevance to, in her own words, “decolonization

of history" (1991) mesh very well with Guha's crucial essays on dominance and hegemony that I have been analyzing here, and also with Dipesh Chakrabarty's follow-up on history as a subaltern discipline when practiced in/from the Third World (1992). The fact, then, that Rivera Cusicanqui and Rossana Barragán coedited the volume I mentioned above, *Debates post coloniales: Una introducción a los estudios de la subalternidad*, can be understood as a confluence of a well-established political and research program in Bolivia with South Asian subaltern studies. Why Bolivian scholars had enough interest in translating South Asian contributions to Spanish and not vice versa is a question that cannot be explored here. I will say, however, that one of the reasons for a one-direction translation goes beyond the individual or collective contributions of each group. It has to do with the larger picture of coloniality of power; with language, translation, and knowledge in the colonial horizon of modernity; with the force of coloniality of power that permeates even intellectual work and dialogues, almost imperceptibly. (And with the hegemony of the English language in cultures of scholarship, even when it is a colonial English, as in South Asia, the Caribbean, and sub-Saharan Africa.)

Ileana Rodríguez, in her introduction to this volume, maps the story and describes the motivations for the formation of the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group. In this belated conversation with Ranajit Guha, and as a member of the Latin American group, my intention was to examine the relations between subalternity and coloniality as they have been discussed in Latin America since the 1970s, and, therefore, to contribute to a triangular dialogue between, on one hand, South Asian and Latin American critical reflections on modernity, coloniality, and Eurocentrism, and on the other, between South Asian and Latin American intellectual production and Latin American and Latino/a intellectuals in the U.S. Some members of the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group have been working on colonialism since the 1980s (mainly Patricia Seed, José Rabasa, Sara Castro-Klarén, and I). The emphasis on postmodernity instead of postcoloniality that Guha underlines in his contribution to this volume has more to do with the differential historical rhythms in the Americas and in South Asia, with the temporal distance from decolonization, and with their location in the world order during the nation-building period. The early decolonization in the Americas and the Caribbean (Haiti) coincided with the emergence of the Enlightenment and the bourgeois revolution, while the late decolonization of India and other countries in South Asia coincided with the emergence of the Cold War, with the ideology of development and modernization, and with the inception of transnational corporations—in other words, with the five hundred and two hundred years of solitude, respectively.

How can these different perspectives benefit from each other? In my view,

critical social theory in Latin America and in U.S. Latin American subaltern studies could benefit from the detailed type of analysis of colonial relations of power (e.g., coloniality of power) that Guha put forward in studies such as "Dominance without Hegemony." South Asian subaltern studies, on the other hand, could benefit from the articulation of modernity/coloniality advanced by Latin American scholars such as Quijano, Dussel, and Rivera Cusicanqui, among others. The South Asian perspective takes as its point of departure the Enlightenment, which explains Guha's reference to Kant. The Latin American perspective takes as a point of departure the sixteenth century, which explains the importance of Bartolomé de Las Casas, of Vitoria and the School of Salamanca (for philosophy of liberation, Dussel) and the emergence of the Atlantic commercial circuit (Quijano, Mignolo). Vitoria set up an agenda for international relations (or the interstate system, in Quijano's vocabulary), cosmopolitanism, and group rights that was ignored during the Enlightenment with the emphasis on nation building and individual (man and citizen) rights. The sixteenth century is not "out" of modernity, a pre-modernity fighting to liberate itself from the Middle Ages. On the contrary, the eighteenth century is a "new" moment of the modern/colonial world-system that tried to deny its past and built itself as the newness of "new"—that is to say, the "modern." There was certainly an interval between the end of the seventeenth century and the end of the eighteenth century when the Spanish Empire was in decay and the British Empire was not yet in place. That was the moment of the Europe of Nations, of the bourgeois revolution, and of an idea of modernity centered on France, England, and Germany. That very moment was the moment of the construction of the "south" of Europe and of orientalism. There was, indeed, a new moment within the modern/colonial world, and not a new, modern world.

The encounter between South Asian subaltern studies and Latin American critiques of modernity and colonialism have one thing in common: their conception that subalternity is not only a question of social groups dominated by other social groups, but of the subalternity in the global order, in the interstate system analyzed by Guha and by Quijano. Dependency theory was clearly an early reaction to this problematic. This is no doubt a crucial and relevant point today, when coloniality of power and subalternity are being rearticulated in a postcolonial and postnational period controlled by transnational corporations and by the network society.

One of the difficulties that Latin American and South Asian intellectuals will have to overcome is the legacy of the "Black Legend"—the idea that modernity is a question of the Enlightenment and that the Iberian Peninsula was steeped in the darkness of the Middle Ages. Consequently, Latin America was the inheritor not of northern, but of southern Europe, closely connected with

Africa and the Islamic world. This image is part of the very self-fashioning of the Enlightenment, and the self-fashioning modernity, but also of the impossibility of understanding that the Haitian revolution was an implementation of the very liberating principles that the Enlightenment was putting forward.

One of the concerns shared by Latin American and South Asian subaltern studies is coloniality at large, an issue that has been investigated independently by each group since the 1970s. But this topic has also been a common concern among north and sub-Saharan African intellectuals since decolonization. One of the future avenues of subaltern studies would be, perhaps, to work toward a mutual understanding of the history, as well as of the rearticulation, of global coloniality being enacted in the network society.

Notes

There is a related and interesting parallelism to be pursued between Latin American critical reflections on coloniality and South Asian subaltern studies. One would be Quijano's "coloniality of power" and Partha Chatterjee's description of power in his description of the "colonial state" (Chatterjee 1993: 15–34). The other would be between Chatterjee's "rule of colonial difference" (1993: 16–18) and my redefinition of "the colonial difference" on the basis of coloniality of power (Mignolo 2000: 15–35). The connections could be pursued by considering José Rabasa's engagement with Dipesh Chakrabarty's "time of history" and "time of gods" (Chakrabarty 1997) in the epilogue of Rabasa's *Writing Violence in the Northern Frontier* (2000).

- 1 The conversation that began at Houston continued at Duke with Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gyan Prakash, Ishita Dube, and Saraubh Dube in the fall of 1998 during the conference "Cross Genealogies and Subaltern Knowledges."
- 2 See Mignolo, "The Larger Picture: Hispanics/Latinos in the Colonial Horizon of Modernity," in Gracia and De Grief 2000.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Du Bois [1905] 1990: 8–9: "One ever feels his two-ness, — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."
- 4 For instance, Samir Amin and Pablo González Casanova in sociology; and Kwasi Wiredu, Enrique Dussel, and Leopoldo Zea in philosophy.
- 5 There is significant difference between Quijano and Wallerstein, which I explore elsewhere (Mignolo 2000) from the perspective of the geopolitics of knowledge. Wallerstein and Quijano are at different ends of the colonial difference, although both of them offer a critique of capitalism and colonialism.
- 6 See Larson 1995 for an update on this issue.

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