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SHIFTING THE GEOPOLITICS OF CRITICAL KNOWLEDGE

Decolonial thought and cultural studies 'others' in the Andes

Let's go comrades,
the European game is definitely finished,
it is necessary to find something else.

(Frantz Fanon, 1963)

As most everywhere in the globe, the production of knowledge in Latin America has long been subject to colonial and imperial designs, to a geopolitics that universalizes European thought as scientific truths, while subalternizing and invisibilizing other epistemes. This dominant geopolitics of knowledge extends to both the Right and the Left, present even in the theoretical and ideological frames that orient many of those recognized (by the academy) as the producers and proponents of critical thought and theory.

Of course, the problem is not with the existence of such frames but rather with the ways they have historically worked to subordinate and negate 'other' frames, 'other' knowledge, and 'other' subjects and thinkers. That is to say, the problem is in the ways that critical thought in Latin America tends to reproduce the meta-narratives of the West while discounting or overlooking the critical thinking produced by indigenous, Afro, and mestizos whose thinking finds its roots in other logics, concerns, and realities that depart not from modernity alone but also from the long horizon of coloniality.

Such was the case even with José Carlos Mariátegui, considered one of the fathers of twentieth century Latin American critical thought. For Mariátegui, the central concerns in Latin America were the struggles of nationhood, culture, and class, understood from the frame of Marxism, applied and thought from the particularity of the Andes. The attention Mariátegui gave to the plight of the peasantry afforded a visibility previously negated. Yet, by elevating the struggles of class over race, converting indigenous peoples to *campesinos* or peasants, and denouncing blacks as barbarians with nothing to contribute to these struggles,¹ Mariátegui not only reproduced Marxism's racial blindness,

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but also the racist sentiments propagated by many key European thinkers, most notably Kant and Hegel.²

Of course the issue here is not to debate with Mariategui or discount his critical contribution. Rather it is to place in tension, and in dialogue with Fanon, the historical and present-day nature of critical thought or theory; that is to say its centeredness in western paradigms, frameworks, and theory. As such, we can ask: How is one to understand critical theory in Latin America today? Is it true, as some claim, that critical theory (or at least postmodernist critical theory) has reached its twilight? And if this is so, should we abandon it or rather reconstruct it from other conceptual and political frameworks and other subjects, frameworks and subjects not considered by the European fathers such as Marx or Horkheimer, nor by Latin American (neo)marxists and (pos)modernists neither in the past nor today? What might it mean to think critical theory from other places – not simply from the West and from modernity, but from what has occurred in its margins or borders, and with a need to shed light on its underside, that is on coloniality? To recognize and take seriously the critical intellectual production of those historically denied the category of ‘thinkers’ – that is, of indigenous and blacks – including the knowledge produced collectively in the context and struggles of social movements? Could such perspectives and contributions shape a distinct critical theory and thought – a critical thought otherwise or of an ‘other’ mode – and why? That is to say, a critical thought whose purposes or goals point not just to other possible worlds (in the spirit of the World Social Forum) but also to decoloniality? Finally, what might this ‘other’ thought afford to the construction of ‘other’ cultural studies, that is to say, a cultural studies of decolonial orientation?

These questions orient the reflections that follow. As such, the interest of this article is to make visible debates, discussions, and projects in Latin America and particularly in the Andes that are concerned with a shifting of the geopolitics of critical knowledge, shifts that work towards the building of decolonial thought and the building of spaces for its positioning and construction.

The geopolitics of critical thought in the frame of modernity/ coloniality

To speak of the geopolitics of knowledge and the geopolitical locations of critical thought is to recognize the persistence of a Western hegemony that positions Eurocentric thought as ‘universal’, while localizing other forms of thought as at best folkloric. For Frantz Fanon but also for Fausto Reinaga,³ a Bolivian quechua-aymara intellectual whose thought found its base and reason in Andean indigenous struggles, the hegemony, universality, and violence of

Western thinking must be confronted and a different thought constructed and positioned from 'other' histories and subjectivities. As both made clear in their writings, the problem is with the intimate entanglement of Western thought to the processes and projects of modernity and coloniality.⁴ In fact, it is with the initiation of both in Latin America in 1492 as part and parcel of European expansionism and capital accumulation that the struggle begins. As Reinaga states in the introduction to his book *La Revolución India*:

... Our struggle comes from afar, from the same instance that the Spanish hordes invaded the Confederation of Amer-Indian Peoples. Our struggle is against all European vestiges . . . Roman Law, the Napoleonic Code, French democracy, Marxism-Leninism, all that maintains us in dependence, in mental colonialism, in blindness without finding the light.
(Reinaga 1970/2001, p. 15)

For Reinaga, the concern was to recognize and construct other theoretical and conceptual frames: 'neither Marx nor Christ, we need to think with our own heads'. Such legacy, struggle, and need are made more complicated when one takes into account the naturalization and intransigence of this eurocentricity, of mental colonialism and blindness even amongst the Left and the proponents of so-called 'critical' theory; a naturalization and intransigence that continues to mark critical thought in Latin America, if not in the globe.

Of course this critique is not meant to discount the existence in Latin America of alternatives to Eurocentric-colonial thought, alternatives that in the 60s and 70s questioned both modernity as the universal model of civilization, and the continued force of imperial and colonial relations (see Lander 2000). The theology and philosophy of liberation, dependency, pedagogy of the oppressed, structural heterogeneity, internal colonialism, participatory action research, among other intellectual productions and schools of thought are representative. Yet, as Lander (2000, p. 521) points out,

This theoretical production remained within the limits of the universal metanarrative of modernity and progress. Only timidly did it explore the enormous implications of the plurality of histories, subjects, and cultures that characterizes Latin America.

However, in the last several decades, these attempts to 'rethink South America from within' have taken a reverse turn (*ibid.*); neoliberalism, postmodernism, and a strengthening of Eurocentric narratives are now what orient most university programs, particularly in the social sciences.⁵ It is in this context that the dominant geopolitics of knowledge, including with regards to critical theory, assumes an ever increasing force, including within contemporary Leftist thinking – both in the academy and politics. Here one can witness a renewed centrality of certain European thinkers and schools of thought and a

conspicuous absence of the colonial experience. This was made clear in the working tables on the 'Reconstruction of Critical-Revolutionary Thought' during the Social Forum of the Americas held in Quito, Ecuador in July 2005. As a summary of the meetings published in the alternative press noted:

In the vacuum provoked by Marxism, the richness of theoretical formulations that occupy the intellectual scene of critical theory, such as the thesis of Foucault, Deleuze, Lacan, and feminist and ecological critique, have opened a horizon of critical currents, the dialogue around which is proving to be extremely positive.

(Moreano 2004).

The reference to these 'critical currents' without consideration of Latin American critical currents of thought including those produced within, in relation to, and by indigenous and afro social movements and their intellectuals,⁶ raises question such as: who produces critical knowledge, for what purposes, and with what recognition? Asked differently: Whose critical knowledge? For whom? Why and for what uses? And, what in fact is meant by 'critical'? With reference to this latter question, Horkheimer's influence continues to be central.

Horkheimer's contribution in 1937 was to the distinction between traditional and critical theory. Specifically, Horkheimer helped elucidate the alienation in traditional theory between value and research, subject and object, knowledge and action. His argument was for a 'critical attitude', including a change in the subject and function of knowledge, in the relation between being and consciousness, and between the theorist and the oppressed sectors of humanity, all aimed at 'the suppression of social injustice', radical transformation, and the construction of a new society (1937, pp. 76–77). By placing attention to the structures in which social reality, as well as the theories that seek to understand this reality, were constructed, Horkheimer challenged the positivism of his era, establishing a relation between critical theory and issues of social justice and transformation. Theory in this sense became more than an activity of contemplation and 'pure thought'; it also became a tool of struggle.

Many Latin American critical theorists continue to find usefulness in Horkheimer both for his challenge to positivism and his distinction between traditional and critical theory. This is the case in Santiago Castro-Gomez's (2000) important article which applies this distinction between the traditional and the critical to a present-day mapping of theories of culture.

For Horkheimer as well as for Marx the struggle, of course, was that of the proletariat⁷ understood in the context of central Europe, a struggle marked by class, not by color, and by modernity, not coloniality.⁸ It is in the application or traveling of this context to other places – in this case Latin America – that

a geopolitical problem begins to take form. As the Afro-Colombian intellectual Manuel Zapata Olivella (1989) notes, here in Latin America the concepts of race and class are inseparable, part and parcel of the colonialist phase of capitalism that created a new economic-racial relation: 'the technological development of white oppressors and the backwardness of pigmented, subordinated peoples. Without these biological and socioeconomic premises, the assumptions that are made about race, class, and culture in America are reduced to mere "elucidations" that hide the true essence of the racist colonial system' (p. 14).

In fact, Castro-Gomez (2000) takes this concern into account in his discussion of postcolonialism as a critical theory of culture, making clear that in the modern world-system in general and in the processes of colonization in particular, 'race' played a key role not only in the relations of production and the market, but also in the natural and social sciences. In fact, what Castro-Gomez works to show is the intrinsic relation between the colonial idea of 'race' and the traditional concept of 'culture', again using Horkheimer's distinction as points of departure and reference. Yet one could ask, what might it mean to shift this geopolitics of critical theory, that is to say, to depart not from Horkheimer but from the critical production in Latin America, including by those who have lived and struggled within the racist and patriarchal colonial system? By starting from this vantage point and locus of enunciation, and later placing it in dialogue with Horkheimer, Wallerstein and other Western thinkers, might the weight of Eurocentric applications be lightened? Said differently, might such a shift help make visible other referents for defining and understanding what can be meant by 'critical', referents for whom the concern is not just with modernity but with its other face, that is coloniality?

Different consequences arise from this geopolitical shift in interpretation and reasoning. In fact,

The implications for non-Western societies and for subaltern and excluded subjects around the world would be quite different if colonialism, imperialism, racism, and sexism were thought of not as regretful by-products of modern Europe, but as part of the conditions that made the modern West possible.

(Lander 2000, p. 525).

Decolonial thought, 'other' thought, and 'other' critical theory

Coloniality as both a concept and lived reality provides a foundational context for understanding this 'other' intellectual production in Latin America in general

and in the Andes in particular. While colonialism ended with independence, coloniality is a model of power that continues. Central to the establishment of this model was the codification of differences in ways that construct and establish a domination and inferiority based on race, serving as a fundamental criterion for the distribution of the population in ranks, places and roles within the social structure of power (Quijano 2000). While this codification was installed with colonialism and with the naming of a hierarchal ordering of social identities: whites, mestizos, 'indios' and 'negros', the latter two erasing the cultural differences that existed before colonialization, its efficacy remains ever present. Such efficacy in fact extends to the 'coloniality of knowledge'; that is, the hegemony of Eurocentrism as *the* perspective of knowledge, and an association of intellectual production with 'civilization', the power of the written word, and with the established racial hierarchy (Quijano 2000). In this construction and its maintenance over more than 500 years, indigenous and black peoples are still considered (by dominant society but also by the white-mestizo Left) as incapable of serious 'intellectual' thinking. It is in this context that the eurocentricity and racialized character of critical thought takes form.

Still, the construction, logic, and use of a critical thought have long existed amongst indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples, although Latin American philosophers, social scientists, and leftist intellectuals have seldom recognized or valued its existence.⁹ Of course the logic of such thought has most often been of a very different kind. For the Nasa intellectual Manuel Quintín Lame (1883–1967), this logic comes not from books but from nature: 'nature educated me under its shadows . . . she taught me to think; . . . *pensar el pensar* – to think thought . . . (Quintín Lame 2004, p. 236).¹⁰ By describing nature as the place of knowledge and wisdom, Quintín Lame in fact established its epistemological logic and condition (Romero 2004), a logic and condition opposed to that of the white world:

It is not true that only those who have studied 15 or 20 years and have learned to think are the ones that have the vocation for thought, even if they have climbed from the Valley to the Mountain. I was born and raised in the Mountain, and from the Mountain I descended to the Valley to write this work . . . The Indian Quintín Lame was able to interpret the thought of the ant and of the various insects that nature cultivates. The thought of the smallest ant is the same as that of the condor when it was finishing to dress in the cave; it is the same as that of the offspring of the tiger, it is the same as that of the son of man. The ant to unwrap its wings and leave its nest does not follow the path of the others, instead it climbs up on the sand and flaps its wings, infinitely challenging because it feels itself to be big and powerful. But in crossing the path it is attacked by its enemy, and it is in this same way, that the error of man is assailed.

(Quintín Lame 2004, p. 151)¹¹

Yet and as the Quechua-Aymara intellectual Fausto Reinaga argued, Western thought distorts this nature by positioning a singular ‘human nature’ as a unitary, eternal, and absolute power.

The ‘human nature’ of the ‘white’ man of the West is one; and that of the man (sic) colonized by the West is other. The ‘human nature’ of the ‘white European beast’ is ferocity; and that of the colonized ‘indigenous-natural’, of the black, yellow, and *indio*, is the struggle for freedom.
(Reinaga 1970/2001, p. 91)

It is this struggle for liberty and freedom that in fact has long guided the ‘critical’ thinking of the peoples of Abya Yala¹² as well as of African descendents. From this struggle, one can question, as does the contemporary Aymara intellectual Esteban Ticona (2005a), the utility of Eurocentric theories, particularly for understanding the colonial condition. ‘The indigenous, afro and poor mestizo America is an example of this feeling, because after more than 500 years, it continues to think with ‘its own head’, trying to crystallize a *‘pensamiento propio’* – a thought of one’s own- that definitely helps our liberation’.

In fact, the recognition, crystallization, and use of a *‘pensamiento propio’* has in very recent years become a visible component in the struggles of both indigenous and Afro groups in the region, struggles that as I have argued elsewhere are not just social and political but also epistemic in nature.¹³ As CRIC – the Indigenous Council of Cauca (Popayan, Colombia) – (2004), makes clear, this work towards the building and articulation of a *pensamiento propio* or indigenous thought is recent, part of a moving from struggles around language and culture to struggles instead centered in the construction and ‘generating of philosophies or epistemologies of our own’ (p. 27). Such process is not limited to CRIC but also evident in Ecuador’s indigenous movement, including in debates about the need to move beyond a simple focus on bilingualism in educational programs to the application of a scientific or epistemic interculturality. It is also evident in the conceptual model of *Amawtay Wasi*, the Intercultural University of Indigenous Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador, conceived and thought from the perspective not of the West but of an Abya Yala cosmology and philosophy (see Walsh 2002, Walsh forthcoming). *Amawtay Wasi* describes its task as one that:

Responds from epistemology, ethics and politics to the decolonialization of knowledge (...), a space of reflection that proposes new ways of conceiving the construction of knowledge (...) potentializing local knowledges and building sciences of knowledge, as an indispensable requirement to work not from the answers to the epistemological, philosophical, ethical, political, and economic order, but from a proposal based on [Andean] philosophical principles.

(*Amawtay Wasi* 2004).

Essential to such constructions among indigenous organizations and groups have been the guiding notion of autonomy – of freedom of control from the Church, landowners, commercial intermediaries, political parties, including those of the Left, and dominant state institutions and models – and of the grounding of a political project that directs action in a host of realms, including in the social, political, economic, and epistemic spheres. In this sense, *'pensamiento propio'* and the building of a cosmology and epistemology are the results of historical transformations in the movement, their moving from demands and vindications to the building of a critical thought that has within its site radical transformations and the creation of new social arrangements or orderings not just for indigenous peoples but for all of society. *'Propio'*, then, is not understood as meaning separation or isolation from other processes or tendencies in society, or an attention only to indigenous cultures, perspectives, and interpretations. Rather and as CRIC (2004, p. 67) argues 'it requires a dialogue with other cultures and the development of a political conscience'.

The 'political conscience' here is not the same as that conceived by Marxism or by Eurocentric critical thought. Instead it is a consciousness whose roots derive from the lived experience of colonial histories and millenary struggles to confront the social, political, epistemic, racialized, and existential effects of these histories. It is what the Afro-Ecuadorian intellectual Juan García refers to as the building of a collective sense of belonging, an unlearning of what the dominant society has inculcated and a relearning of past and present ancestral knowledge, a focus on the social, political, and epistemic work that needs to be done within (Walsh and León forthcoming).

In this sense *'pensamiento propio'* is suggestive of a different critical thought, one that seeks to mark a divergence with dominant 'universal' thought (including in its 'critical', progressive, and leftist formations). Such divergence is not meant to simplify indigenous or black thought or to relegate it to the category or status of localized, situated, and culturally specific and concrete thinking; that is to say, as nothing more than 'local knowledge' understood as mere experience. Rather it is to put forward its political and decolonial character, permitting a connection then among various *'pensamientos propios'* as part of a broader project of 'other' critical thought and knowledge. Khatibi (2001) refers to this broader project as the 'complot' of 'other' thought. For indigenous and black intellectuals such as Quintín Lame (2004), Muyolema (2001), García (see Walsh and García 2002 and Walsh and León forthcoming), Reinaga (2001) and Zapata Olivella (1989) such project opens the possibility of a different universalization of radical and subversive character.

'Other', in this sense, is not meant to refer to one thought more or to the anthropological other of alterity. It is instead to bring forward and relate histories, struggles, experiences, and knowledges lived and constructed within and marked by the context of colonialism and its processes of subalternization and racialization; that is by the common connector of coloniality (Mignolo

2003). Its use here engages that introduced by the Arab-Islamic intellectual Abdelkebir Khatibi (2001). That is, a signifying of a collective mode of thinking that is produced and thought from difference, towards liberation. It is a thought that demands a radical elucidation, a strategical use, and a play with the political; a thought that opens decolonial possibilities, not just in the social and political spheres but also in terms of existence. In this sense and as I have argued elsewhere (Walsh 2005a), 'other' thought becomes a strategical tool in the struggle to confront non-existence, dominated existence and dehumanization – key referents, it seems, in rethinking critical thought or critical knowledges from other spaces and places – spaces and places that modernity or intellectuals like Horkheimer never could have imagined.

To speak of an 'other' critical thought then is to give credence to ongoing struggles – struggles that are epistemic as well as political in character – to confront coloniality, thus marking a positioning radically distinct from that which locates critical theory simply within the histories and experiences of modernity and the narratives these histories and experiences have fostered and created. Such shift is important for what it helps reveal, including the subjects left out or marginalized by much of critical theory and their socio-political and epistemic agency, but also the association between thought and social and political intervention. Said differently, what this 'other' thought brings to light is both a political use of knowledge and an epistemic acting on the political from the colonial difference. It is an intellectual production not aimed at individual accomplishment or limited to the confines of the academy, but rather at the shared need to confront the colonial-racist structures, systems, and institutions of society through a collective praxis that finds its meaning in the condition of the colonial difference.¹⁴ And it is *this* difference that marks a distinction with the anti-colonial thinking predominant in Latin America in the 60s and 70s, a thinking typically associated with the Left and white-mestizo intellectuals.

What does this difference afford in terms of a rethinking of 'critical' intellectual work, including for the building of spaces and places of thought of an 'other' kind even within the university?

Decolonial shifts and cultural studies 'others'

Discussions in the United States about cultural studies in Latin America typically depart from associations with Nestor García Canclini and Jesús Martín Barbero on the one hand and Nelly Richard and Beatriz Sarlo on the other, although these latter two more often refer to their work as cultural critique and not 'cultural studies'. In fact, it is the work and perspectives of these four authors that have had the widest circulation both within Latin America and without; they have also served as the basis for critique for treatises on the problems of cultural studies.¹⁵

Of course the naming of cultural studies itself is part of the predicament, raising questions about the reproduction of British and US models in the south and the negation or subalternization of the trajectory of cultural production here, thus contributing in some sense to the dominant geopolitics of knowledge (see Walsh 2003). However what interests me here is not this debate as such, but rather the socialization of our experience in Ecuador to both indisciplinate the human and social sciences and rethink and reconstruct cultural studies from the political and ethical perspectives of knowledge (including subalternized knowledges) and from the borders of modernity/coloniality. The reference here is to the specific experience of the Doctoral program in Latin American Cultural Studies at the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar in Quito, the overall goal of which is to build new critical communities of thought, interpretation, and intervention.¹⁶

This effort is conceived as a space of encounter between disciplines and intellectual, political, and ethical projects, projects constructed in different historical moments and epistemological places and concerned with the search for ways to think, know, and act toward a more socially just world and towards the comprehension and change of structures of domination – epistemological as well as social, cultural, and political. As such, it is directed toward a renovation and reconstruction of critical thought in ways that take into account the present-day relations between culture, politics, and economy, challenge the hegemony of Eurocentric perspectives, and promote dialogues and *thinking with* thought and knowledge ‘others’, including that of Afro and indigenous social movements and intellectuals.

The interest is thus, in part, with intellectual projects and the building of a space and place of thought concerned with the consequences of the colonial difference and the epistemic racism of modernity; projects, spaces, and places that are directed toward local histories that are simultaneously global, reflections of the present-day cultural logic of late capitalism and the installation of new forms of global coloniality.¹⁷ In this sense, *a thinking from* Latin America (but with relation as well to other parts of the globe) gives importance to the place of enunciation, and to what Arturo Escobar (2000) refers to as the relation between the creation of place and the creation of people. It is the ‘place’ of Latin America that helps to make visible ‘the forms of subaltern thought and the local and regional modalities that configure the world’ (Escobar 2000, p. 116) that Western theory (including in its metropolitan postcolonial versions) and the dominant geopolitics of knowledge tends to hide.

The fact that the students who participate in this doctorate (now in its second promotion) come from the various countries of the Andean region and have, for the most part, a strong base of experience in the social and political realms (including in and with social movements and community-based processes and struggles), enables a level of dialogue and exchange not typical in most academic settings, this further strengthened by the presence of

indigenous and Afro intellectuals within the group.¹⁸ It is this base, combined with efforts to build dialogue and shared (rather than simply individual) knowledge production that is what gives substance and credence to the idea of an ‘other’ space and place of thought.¹⁹ The majority of faculty share these interests and goals. More than coming to ‘teach’, their contributions have been to further extend critical dialogue through theoretical, conceptual, and thematic explorations and reflection, thus forming part of these emergent communities of critical thought, interpretation, and intervention.

Overall, this experience along with the others in which we are engaged in Ecuador, are less concerned with the institutionalization of programs (that is, with the establishment of a new place of study) than with the building of spaces and places (within the university but not limited to it) for the generation and production of non eurocentric and decolonial thought. These efforts mark the urgency to construct more systematic articulations and bridges among intellectual, political, and ethical projects, both those that come from intellectuals within the academy and those outside of it, particularly those associated with social movements.²⁰ But they also mark the need to promote new critical and decolonial projects, and to extend existing projects to epistemological and educational restructuring and intervention. In essence, they form part of the search for other possible knowledges and worlds.

As a way of conclusion

In a recent work, Arturo Escobar (2003) makes the argument for the need to take seriously the epistemic force of local histories and the need to think theory through the political praxis of subaltern groups. What such argument points to is not the incorporation or inclusion of the histories, praxis, and ‘other’ thought of subaltern groups as new objects of study – a kind of *critical cultural studies of the other*. Rather and as I have argued here, it suggests the building of new places and new communities of thought, interpretation, and intervention that seek to generate and build intersections among critical forms of decolonial thought and political-epistemic projects grounded in the histories and lived experiences of coloniality – what we might instead refer to as *cultural studies ‘others’* or a *cultural studies of decolonial orientation*.

Of course the issue is much deeper than the naming or conceptualization of spaces and places of critical thought. As I have attempted to make clear here, it is an issue grounded in the ways coloniality and the geopolitics of knowledge have worked to enable modernity as *the* ‘civilization’ project of the West, a project that has systematically worked to subordinate and negate ‘other’ frames, ‘other’ knowledges, and ‘other’ subjects and thinkers. The location of critical thought and the meta-narratives that have directed it within this project, including that critical thought associated with the Left in Latin

America, is demonstrative of the complexity of the problem and its simultaneously local and global nature.

To begin to 'think thought' from 'other' places and with intellectuals for whom the point of departure is not the academy but political-epistemic projects of decoloniality, might open paths that enable shifts in the geopolitics of critical knowledge as well as the building of a shared praxis of a very different kind, a praxis that attempts to confront what the Afro-Colombian intellectual and *ekobio mayor* Manuel Zapata Olivella once affirmed: 'The chains are not on our feet, but on our minds'.

Notes

- 1 'The contribution of the negro that arrived as a slave seems less valuable and negative [in comparison to the indigenous]. The negro brought with him his sensuality, superstition, and primitive nature. He is not in conditions to contribute to any culture, but rather threatens to obstruct culture through the crude and living influence of his barbarianism (Mariategui 1995).
- 2 See Eze (2001) and Walsh (2004).
- 3 Interesting to note is the dialogic relation that Reinaga, a Bolivian quechua-aymara intellectual, established with Fanon in his texts. Such dialogue is the only one of which I am aware in which an Andean radical indigenous intellectual looks for points of relation with a radical black thinker.
- 4 For a detailed discussion of the relation between knowledge and the projects of modernity/coloniality, see Mignolo (2001).
- 5 The query of a professor to graduate students in a Latin American university program centered on critical thought and Latin American cultural studies makes evident this intellectual hegemony: how is it possible to understand Latin America and the social sciences if one has not read Foucault, Bourdieu, Deleuze and Lacan?
- 6 This was also made evident in the 2005 meeting of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre. Here the voices of black and indigenous movements remained absent in the major spaces of debate of the Left (spaces overwhelming represented by white men of Euro-American origin). And while indigenous movements were given for the first time their own territorial space, this was physically and programmatically marginalized from the main space of the Forum.
- 7 For Horkheimer (1937), the situation of the proletariat afforded no guarantees in terms of critical knowledge or consciousness. '... The clarity of class consciousness shows itself in the always open possibility of a tension between the theoretician and the class that directs his thought (p. 50). Both were understood as interactive processes in which the critical theorist could play a key role in helping expose social contradictions not just as an expression of a concrete historical situation but also as a stimulating and transformative factor.

- 8 For a discussion regarding the position of the pre-sub Comandante Marcos Rafael Guillen in this configuration see Walsh (2005).
- 9 This is despite the existence of written texts and publications, the distribution of which for the same reasons argued here, have had limited circulation.
- 10 As Romero (2004, 114) notes, Quintín Lame's objective in *pensar el pensar* was to 'offer a point of view with regard to the milestones of the catholic religion and his own version of this religion, and analyze and argue, using both neo-tomist philosophy and an indigenous perspective, diverse philosophic problems about nature, education and knowledge, themes at the center of discussion during the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries in Colombian society'.
- 11 Originally written in 1939 when the author was 56 years old.
- 12 *Abya Yala* is the name coined by the *cunas* in Panama to refer to the territory and the indigenous nations of the Americas, 'land in full maturity', a name now generally assumed by these nations to refer to the Americas. For Muyulema (2001), this naming has a double significance: as a political positioning and as a place of enunciation, that is to say as a way to confront the colonial weight present in 'Latin America' understood as a cultural project of westernization, ideologically articulated in *mestizaje*. As such and as Ticona (2005b) points out (in conversation with Muyulema), 'the 'recategorizing' of names, such as *Abya Yala*, means a rethinking of decolonialization from the experience of kichua and aimara peoples and from their ethical-political values'. Of course the problem is that while *Abya Yala* recuperates indigenous roots, it leaves out the presence and struggles of African descendents.
- 13 See Walsh (2005a, forthcoming).
- 14 Reinaga (2001, p. 95) makes this clear: 'Our philosophy, motor and goal of our thought, is directed toward liberty'.
- 15 See, for example, Reynoso (2000) and Follari (2002).
- 16 While the doctoral program is the center of reflections here, this program is only one of several sites where we are working to build these communities of thought, interpretation, and intervention. The others include the spaces devoted to work around the Afro-Andean diaspora, both in graduate level programs, with Afro organizations, groups, and communities, and through the *Fondo Documental Afro-Andino*. This latter space, part of a collaborative agreement between the organization *Proceso de comunidades negras – PCN* and the university, was formed in 2002 when PCN placed in the university's trust over 3000 hours of taped oral histories and testimonies from Afro-Ecuadorian communities (compiled over a 35 year time frame) and over 8000 photographs with the goal of systematizing this material and putting it in useable forms for schools and communities.
- 17 With regard to this latter point see Mignolo (2002).
- 18 Given the intellectual and academic isolation among Andean and Latin American countries and the present-day economic crisis, an academic

institutionalization of this 'space and place' is in fact strategically necessary for the structure and financing it affords. In this sense, institutionalization serves as a strategy that helps enable the construction and promotion not of a program but of an intellectual project of a clearly political nature. Such project has its resonance outside Quito and the university as such, serving as a base for the building of a network of projects in other spaces and places in the region.

- 19 Examples include two published collections: *Pensamiento crítico y matriz (de) colonial* (Walsh 2005b) and *Texiendo textos. Cinco hilos para pensar los estudios culturales, la colonialidad y la interculturalidad* (Kowii *et al.* 2005).
- 20 Of course in Latin America, these inside and outside distinctions are less evident than they are in the United States or Europe. In Latin America it is fairly common for intellectuals who work in the university to have strong ties to social movements. Less common, however, is the incorporation within the university of the knowledge produced by these movements as 'knowledge' and not merely as examples of 'ethnographic experience'.

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