

# Two colonial theories in relation. A Fanonian genealogy<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This essay explores postcolonial itineraries in relation to decolonial thinking and focuses on the conceptual and political articulation that Frantz Fanon's work represents for both fields. Two main dimensions are at stake here: first, the discussion on modernity from the plot of coloniality, and, second, the political dimension that runs across postcolonial and decolonial readings.

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## 1. INTRODUCTORY NOTES

In September 2013 I participated at the Colloquium Critical Southern Thought. Genealogies and emergencies. This name evoked a wish to bond different weavings of critical thought, particularly that referring to and coined in the global South. The issues and the questions in this meeting seemed to indicate that beyond sometimes deep differences, among other forms of thought coined in relation to the questions on the modern and the colonial, the points in common exceed divergences. What is more, the traces

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left by different generations are still part of the conversation about the persistent and problematic issue of the intimate relation between modernity and coloniality.

In the spirit of the colloquium, in this text the proximities, rather than differences, between two framing plots of contemporary critical thought are discussed under the general rubrics of postcolonial criticism and decolonial thinking. This is an itinerary focused on these two movements with the purpose of articulating them by means of the Fanonian writing, which is one of the main genealogical keys for many others, such as the project *Shifting the Geography of Reason* by thinkers like Lewis Gordon<sup>2</sup> and Paget Henry in the Caribbean. Developing the reason why those contact points turn to be more interesting than differences cannot be easily done in few pages. However, it is possible to say that it is in the inhabited and pestered crossroads in Latin-American, between the geopolitics of knowledge and persistent colonialities, as well as in the critical processes including the political and epistemological agendas oriented in emancipatory terms. Writing from the South is more than writing in a locality, since it means a place of enunciation and a form of survival. Hence, drawing relations is crucial.

## **2. ON MODERNITY AND COLONIALISM**

The contemporary theoretical debates, even the least articulated ones, share their occurrence in connection to some emplotment opened by modernity, in relation to modernity itself and its complex zones. As such, certain dependence on the modern has been one of the most persistent characteristics of the theoretical development, in the Latin-American academia as well as beyond it. As known, one of the terms that intensely marked departing from and getting closer to the modern was postmodernism itself and the postmodernity variant destined to describe a certain state of culture and the finisecular times. The early 1980's, particularly during the transition to democracy in the Southern cone, were witnesses of a long discussion on the role of the prefix "post" when enunciated in relation to the terms "modernity" or "modern." Since this time of narratives about the end of modernity, it has been clearly stated that the position over-

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<sup>2</sup> See in particular Lewis R. Gordon's (2006) *Disciplinary Decadence. Living Thought in Trying Times*. In this book Gordon works on the project *Shifting the Geography of Reason*. He defines suspension of teleology of disciplinarity pointing to the multiple and complex events that gave origin to disciplines. Fanon was a specter in the text, i.e. he was present as a way of thinking on the basis of Gordon's inquiries.

coming the precedent conditions inscribed these conditions in their own narrativity. There was no possibility of imagining a postmodern dimension of experience without stepping on certain ground of modernity. Jean François Lyotard's writing, for example, characterized the slippery sense of postmodernity and at the same time inhabited, with new jargon, the discourse of theory and philosophy. Together with that discussion, new facets of late capitalism appeared. In the sphere of consumption, this capitalism postulated and practiced the disappearance of almost all the social ontologies at stake, from the ideologies to that difference which art supposedly meant in the world. The distance imagined between these facets and consumption disappeared at giant steps, not only from the discursive plot but also from the spheres of the symbolization of social practices.

It was a time of prophets less keen on grand narratives. Anyway, it was a complex time in which the forms of politics gradually became similar to the market that, at the same time, became the apparently de-substantiated norm, from which ideological directions, persistent social forms, totalizing historical narratives and the subject's saga among others, were judged inappropriate.

The drifts of the prefix were several. Its persistence made it the opening key to other spheres for the criticism of modern trajectories and their forms for the production of sense. Since the 1960's the studies on cultural construction, which was implicit in the idea of West in relation to that of East, began at different points of the global intellectual landscape. This movement, whose antecedents are close to the struggles for national liberation and the independent movements of Africa and Asia, consolidated as criticism of colonialism in its discursive dimensions and developed into what could be called a colonial theory when the object that had caused it was already retreating. However, the more persistent phenomena in the order of discourse, which were still present and, at the same time had a marked performative capacity, were the ones announcing the appearance of this new criticism. The role Edward Said played in this context was fundamental. His work articulated the old Gramscian issues of domination and hegemony with the novelties of the discourse by Michel Foucault in an object that had not been thought of in those theoretical weavings and which was called by Said Orientalism or Orientalist discourse. Said's writing context was that which considered a massive retreat of the popular causes: the beginning of the neoconservative politics, dictator-

ships, neoliberalism and wars like the one in Malvinas, among others. Though Said was not the first one to notice and describe the discursive modes proper for the cultural and political otherness, his writings, especially *Orientalism* (1990), represented an attempt to open the chest of those symbolic and subjective dimensions that discourses put at stake. It is important to highlight that the texts by Said served to imagine the processes such as decolonization, processes that had been throughout the theoretical, political writings by a distinguished group of Latin-American, Caribbean, Asian and African writers, such as Frantz Fanon, Amílcar Cabral, Aimé Césaire, John William Cooke, Hernández Arregui, Roberto Fernández Retamar and José Carlos Mariátegui among others. These writers were to be considered especially in relation to discourses that embraced and built the cultural otherness. Therefore, it could be fairly said the prefix “post” accepted different characterizations since it brought politics to discussion, limited in postmodern debates. In almost all texts from that time there are few attempts to hide the political question that articulated them and at the same time connected them with the strongest traditions of the twentieth-century decolonization. In those preliminary moments, the postcolonial agenda was constituted first, out of the non-exhausted impulse of the political, cultural and economic emancipation in the societies which had suffered colonialism, in particular those in Asia and Africa, and second, out of the necessity to think about the subjectivities that appeared in the ex-colonial metropolis as consequence of the relatively massive immigration of the inhabitants from old colonized countries.

In different senses, the problems in the postcolonial agendas nurtured happy pages of contemporary cultural and political analysis. In all, it is interesting to emphasize that, unlike other registers considered generically postmodern (though the precision of these labels should be revised), the problem of the political articulation with the theoretical questions never disappeared. There have been, and there still are, domesticated versions of this initial impulse, such as the one defining the postcolonial theories as successors of the postmodern theories and making them available to think the third world, among other kinds of imagery. However, the issue was that politics, since it opens the question about historical action and the subjectivities involved, rather than becoming an elusive category of thought, it has turned more complex as it included what is rejected in the colonial world. It inhabits the new forms of protest and subjectivity, what has been negotiated in the weavings of meaning by means of resistance, appropriation or simple

ways of discursive circulation. This is the perspective that goes through, for instance, the hermetic writings by Homi Bhabha (2002) and Gayatri Spivak (1990).

In this case, when working in a historiographical reconstruction of theoretical and political thinking movements, it would be important to ask about how legitimate such textual ordering, the definitions in a certain field, or the tracing of critical genealogies are in order to draw a series of influences and dealings and to defend an organizational hypothesis in a group of texts. This question aims at finding past and present marks which, as Foucault would state, define in themselves the way to produce a new configuration of knowledge. Therefore, the postcolonial writing, in its wide range of registers involved, added the specific political demand included in the registers of anticolonial critical thinking before the vicissitudes of deconstructive readings, which also inscribed a political conception.

The actual question is what the sources of this reflection are and how they work. In this article several questions on the reflexive field were closely connected to the political impulses originated by various critics' and militants' writings against colonialism, such as Franz Fanon's. This saga can clearly be found in the postcolonial sequence and decolonial articulation produced by Walter D. Mignolo, among others. To start with, it would be important to comprehend that the elements in the agenda organized the readings of those inscribed in the movement of postcolonial criticism. It has been already stated in the essay it is impossible, particularly in Walter D. Mignolo's texts, to avoid defining Franz Fanon as the figure key to the critical articulation which supposes postcolonial criticism as well as the decolonial turn. In the following lines there is an attempt to answer why this thinker is important to both perspectives. First, it is necessary to notice the questions and interventions on colonialism in Fanon's work refer back to the experiences of colonization, which could be called a second modernity, i.e. the one giving place to the emergence of the imperial British and French powers. All his writing concentrated on the space of wide criticism to the ways of social organization which resulted from colonialism. Therefore, as a new field of thinking was introduced by inquiring into the discursive and symbolic dimensions of subjectivity, there was a dimension anchored in two precise issues: first, in the fact of a decolonizing agency of the subjects and thence, its political, theoretical validity; and second, in the material dimension of the historical processes. In that framework, reading Said, for example, included

Fanon as reflexive nucleus to approach the political problem of desalienation and decolonization. Fanon was a warning of the critical possibilities when the colonial world was thought. He was also a memory of the bond between thought and action and, last, a remembrance of the colonial world conditions which projected themselves under neo-colonial forms in the postcolonial period. Latin-American thinkers such as Aníbal Quijano and Walter Mignolo would name this projection of matrixes of power and social relation coloniality<sup>3</sup>. This term will be eventually referred to in the article.

Fanon was seductive (beyond those vicissitudes his writing had gone through in the early sixties and seventies) because his positions offered a principle for the explanation on how to approach, from the womb of colonialism and its discursive mechanisms, a reversal of the terms and words that had desolated the colonized minds and bodies. They were words that had represented not only a way of assigning social positions but also constituting a plot of knowledge, and even an epistemology.

Fanon's writing was one of Said's reading keys in *Culture and Imperialism* (1996). In this text Said thought the culture of insurgency, especially the one gradually expressed through poets' and artists' voices and organized in their writings on concepts such as national culture, since in their processes of subjectivation there was a central mark of Fanonian discussion on colonialism. Hence, under Fanon's influence Said wove some principles to think the complexity of decolonization. One of the most important complexities was the decision there is no synchrony between independence and liberation. Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) was a source of warnings on the possible negative consequences if what at risk in the decolonization was not considered. A formal independence was not the answer. Like few historical-political categories, liberation, which appeared as the desired objective, motivated to think it should contemplate all the events of criticism to colonialism, from criticism of material life to the symbolic production of the affected society and the forms of subjectivity at stake in it. At the end of *Culture and Imperialism*, Said made some moral conclusions on this dimension and made others on the Western critical thought, which embraced his theoretical comprehension on the issue. His most important conclusion was of the tragic nature since it

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<sup>3</sup> Read the extended discussion on the consequences of the epistemological order of coloniality in Edgardo Lander's compilation (2000) *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales Perspectivas latinoamericanas*.

placed men and women in a situation where they were considered exceeded by historical and social processes. Said's writing resulted attractive since it included the notion of liberation that Fanon and others had previously proposed. Tragedy was present not in the failure of the concrete historical experiences of decolonization but in the way of learning, in a sort of pedagogy which insisted on expressing that each form of thinking the self in univocal way meant theoretical and political failure. In a double sense this is an interesting inflection that puts at stake this tragic notion. For one thing, it reproduces what could be called the naturalization of the social and cultural relations of imperialism since it made the subjects think themselves in a unique way, as one thing only. For another thing, the critical consciousness led to a kind of different tragedy that postulated the comprehension of the subjects outside cultural absolutism. On this scenery it is possible to read about one of the central dimensions of modernity, now pierced by the history of colonialism and imperialism, and about a critical humanism that seemed, by all means, to restore the idea of the emergence of a humanity so far cancelled behind ethnocentrism and civilizing, colonial discourses, among others. Old humanism, which could be somehow thought as the myth supporting colonization, had been highly questioned by Fanon before the machinery capturing the French poststructuralist thought declared a frontal battle against it. However, Fanonian criticism of humanism, which Said follows, gave emphasis to a reconstructed notion of humanism that was the result of having become agent in history. It is this new humanism, woven in the folds of the politics of national liberation and in concomitant discourses that did not suppose the development of a homogeneous and hegemonic narrative but a kind of radical heterogeneity in which the dimensions of the difference, later thought in deconstructive terms, gave content to it. In this sense, the postcolonial critical project later finds itself in harmony with the decolonial perspectives in Walter Dignolo's thought, in relation to the term "diversality." This term evokes a fascinating horizon on the Latin-American reflection which starts out in Enrique Dussel's work and which Dignolo deeply goes into in several writings. What becomes fascinating from every point of view is Dussel's developments are followed with autonomy from the North-American and English academia, where postcolonial criticism had been born. Dignolo's argument is Dussel showed the way in which Hegelian thinking inscribed a Totality that provoked exteriority. Geopolitically situated, the Hegelian thought produced crossings between Europe and Asia, Africa and America. The Ontology of Being had already been given a second place of enunciation with the reading of Immanuel Levinas, as he pointed to the irre-

ducibility of metaphysics. The Other received a third space with Dussel's analectics<sup>4</sup> (1974), which multiplies as colonialist histories diverse. It is about the coloniality of Being. This allowed the emergence of divergent stories in relation to the Totality, but they all connected through the coloniality of power that unfolded in the history of capitalism (Mignolo, 2001, pp.34–36). It is clear strengthening exteriority could have been one of the options, but the process was different. It was the colonial character of modernity, the overlapping of coloniality in modern subjectivity, no matter the story it tells, what was strengthened in Dussel's discussion and reappropriated by Mignolo. Thence, it would be appropriate to draw a connection between the tragic dimension Said saw in the history of imperialism and colonization with the project of diversality. In both cases, it was clearly stated that there is no discussion on modern subjectivity without the stalking of coloniality, though the term was enunciated by Quijano, Mignolo and others in a decolonial field. Then, rather than disappearing, the Fanonian trace placed itself in the center of this plot.

In order to approach the issue in relation to Mignolo's positions, first it would be necessary to make a brief reference to the kind of reflection Homi Bhabha provokes on colonial discourse, and to notice that his postcolonial memory, at least deduced after his writing, is pierced by strokes of Fanonian writing. It could be possible to state the genealogy of decolonial thought that Bhabha proposes moves away from *The Wretched of the Earth* and it moves closer to *Black Skins, White Masks* (1952). In Voloshinov's words, the stresses in a very same ideological sign are different. Bhabha (2002) projected Fanon's ideas in the field of demands for identity and difference in metropolitan scenarios into the so-called minorities. Besides, he focused his attention on systematizing the analysis of colonial discourse in order to comprehend the ways in which all its dimensions articulated and worked. His proposal, in coherence with the deconstructive movement, consisted of describing the relations in which the colonial discourse was articulated. Thence, *Black Skin, White Masks* became a sort of unique cultural trace, since Fanon had worked on his pages the difficult way in which the colonial subjectivity

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<sup>4</sup> With his analectics Dussel aims at initiating a struggle against the Hegelian plot on the comprehension of America and, particularly against the dialectical method, which perceives like an imperial method. This is a concept able to account for the other's free entity, not trapped in the dialectical totality with no exteriority. For Dussel, the dialectical method describes a totality without fissure, and it realizes in itself. Taking this into account, together with the traits of Levinassian thinking, the analectics proposes a method where the other is not the result of an inner process, but someone free to reveal himself/herself. Therefore the other becomes the point of departure



emerged in a place that resulted unfavorable for autonomies and “luxuries” of the sort. Then Bhabha proposed not a moral impugnation against colonialism, but an analysis of its procedures. In relation to four concepts considered to study colonialist discourse, he wove his heterogeneous and eclectic texts, thought in tension with the Fanonian writing. Though, ambivalence, its typical function of stereotype, mimesis and hybridity came from scenarios of psychoanalysis, in the complex journeys from Freud to Lacan, the articulation in terms of colonial subjectivity had Frantz Fanon’s name on it. Using each of these concepts meant the organization of an epistemology that displaced itself from any causal and mechanical relation between material life and the symbolic universe. This epistemology also aimed at finding the zones where colonial discourses at work produced subjectivities with dispersed position, probably eccentric to the notions of normality and the order of the very same colonial discourse. In his books, Fanon had prevented that colonialism which reduced the colonized to the level of animalization, constituted it a desiring body when drawing its relations with the world of colonizers<sup>5</sup>. Homi Bhabha inverted the Fanonian terms and defined the desiring situation as a crucial characteristic of colonial discourse. Therefore, the stereotype, a figure destined to stabilize in its monstrosity the figure of the colonized in its iterative procedure, at the same time revealed fixation, anguish and, then, produced a way of knowing. Hence, iteration guaranteed certain registration of truth sustained as evident dimension in the colonized’s way of knowing. The reasons for monstrosity demanded repetition in order to acquire verisimilitude, and at the same time, they demanded stabilization in order to turn familiar that which was a source of anguish. It meant to make familiar the difference implicit in the body of a complex colonial subjectivity which was not univocal. Therefore, at the same time the colonial body was trapped in the stereotype, the demand for similarity was gradually articulated. Then, if the stereotype granted certain stability, mimesis appeared in the economy of colonial signs as the most complex operation of colonial discourse. The idea is the demand for likeness fixes the colonial bodies in relation to itself, so as to trigger identity images, such as civilization, progress, reason, rationality, order, and others, to identify with. Here there is a paradox: the likeness is claimed to the complete assumption of the metropolitan culture (the *evolués* from the French colonies) at the same time this assumption can never be complete to the level of autonomy and self -

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<sup>5</sup> See De Oto, A. & Quintana, M. M. (2010). *Biopolítica y colonialidad. Una lectura crítica de Homo Sacer* [Biopolitics and coloniality. A critical reading of Homo Sacer] and (2012) *El fauno en su laberinto* [The faunus in its labyrinth].

determination. However, it is interesting to notice the natives found themselves in front of this demand in terms of cultural practice, and mimesis had necessarily to be a different one. Mimesis is produced but at the same time, in the performative process, it inaugurates forms that move the signs to a sphere that is not the original one. It would be appropriate to mark Bhabha places this perspective under the influence of Jacques Derrida's writings. The word colonial is taken to form a chain of signs, but it is this chain in performance, where he is inscribed, from which meaning is derived. The *differánc*e model is now formulated in the heart of the colonial relation. If mimesis brings about the idea of "bad appropriation," the in between appears in the revisionist space, where the cultural practices are articulated. Derrida had already postulated in *Of Grammatology* (1967) meaning is produced in the double process, which implies differ and differentiate, in the chain of meanings constituting language. The notion of *differánc*e involves the two moments. If one thinks about the process Bhabha puts at risk in relation to the language of colonial discourse, this dimension seems to present itself at the moment when those natives from disperse position produce a different sequence in the chain of signs. In other words, the signs of colonial discourse may present an apparently stable development for a centered enunciation locus but at the moment in which mimesis is produced; this stability of the sign is doubted. The chain and its ways of signification in *differánc*e is a different one.

### **3. GOING TO DECOLONIAL TURN, AND COMING BACK**

These two references of postcolonial thought were considered with the purposes of studying, first, the importance of the political dimension in their readings and observing then, each time the problem of modernity is to be thought hard revision and complex thinking would be required. Though neither Said nor Bhabha assumed a category like coloniality, their conceptual operations became close to it. Even different in each thinker, both persistence in a political question and the reflection on the problem of colonial subjectivity played the role of connection between modernity and colonialism. It would be appropriate to observe the emerging tension of a subjectivity, which monolithically is not resolved, fostered the idea that modernity was not European patrimony, but a zone of complex contacts, tensions, mixtures and obliterations, among others. The crucial component that could make this possible was not Said's order of the Gramscian

and Foucaultian readings, or Bhabha's theoretical *mélange* from psychoanalysis to deconstruction, but the object of their interest: colonialism. It would be daring to state that the fact these works remained in contact with the historical and cultural dimension which colonialism represented in the modern world prevented them from falling into prosy postmodernism that desolated the academia during the eighties and the nineties. This is the aspect that connects them with, among others, Quijano's, Dussel's and Mignolo's critical experiences. In other words, modernity and its values can no longer be thought separated from the imperial and colonial processes that were on the basis of the experience itself. The possibilities of thinking modern subjectivity as the daughter of few European continental traditions become narrower. From Sartre's prologue to *The Wretched of the Earth* and even in Fanon's book, the warning of something different occurring in relation to the classical terms of the European political thought sounds very loud. Modern subjectivity started a journey, but as it usually happens, this journey would change her completely.

In this story, the issue is postcolonial criticism constituted itself as a movement for the explanation of the contemporary world, in other words, for the elaboration of a criticism to modernity. In spite of the interweaving with the so-called continental philosophy, this criticism kept a crucial exteriority that was not given by exoticness, cultural strangeness, or any other similar dimension, but given by a cultural, epistemic and subjective difference unfolded by the process of colonial empowering. The first step taken by the postcolonial theories was to assume that the classical organizational forms were overwhelmed by contemporary experience, which had become evident at global scale after the second postwar world, i.e. since decolonization as a historical, political and cultural process. Though there are similarities with the development of the well-known postmodern criticism, no possible version of postmodernism incorporated colonialism to the critical repertoire of modern rationality, of instrumental technical rationality or grand narratives<sup>6</sup>. This perspective could be sensed only in postcolonial criticism, in the philosophy of liberation, in the first studies of the theory of dependence, of internal co-

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<sup>6</sup> Fernández Retamar has pointed out that in *The Postmodern Condition* by Jean François Lyotard looking up any reference to imperialism is in vain. The mercantilization of knowledge in replacement of humanity searching for its destinies of liberation in knowing is one of the most important descriptions in Lyotard's book. The attitude of reading without judgement which Retamar reads in Lyotard makes him develop a "sub-developing" thought. (Fernández Retamar, 1998, pp.129-130)

lonialism and, then openly shown in Quijano's work, in the decolonial turn<sup>7</sup> and in the Latin American colonial studies, field in which Mignolo is central reference (Verdesio, 2001). It is interesting to observe though they remained isolated by the same weaving which Mignolo calls colonial difference and imperial difference (particularly those theories previous to the decolonial turn), they were all specific forms of response in the coloniality of power weaving.

This panorama undoubtedly becomes complex when the politicity at stake is connected in all these theoretical and philosophical developments with the epistemology which begins to unfold itself in order to focus on the complex object of subjectivity. A quick sight in each of them would awaken questions that for years had seemed to remain latent. Among them, the following are considered the most important ones: has the rationalization of the social relations been overcome in the contemporary social analysis? What happens to our general notions on the past when the ways in which the affiliating processes at national level are challenged? How are notions such as liberation inscribed in the imagination of a subaltern subjectivity? It is necessary to notice each of these questions, among many others, has exercised pressure on the spaces of knowledge and its organization. This problem remains open since each practical criticism previously mentioned was shaped by those which could be named as "non-articulated remainders" of hegemony. In this sense, it would be possible to think that the postcolonial studies meet formulations which, though they do not have the same conceptual origin, are gone through by a similar density of phenomena.

Latin American intellectuals such as Fernando Coronil (2003), Mignolo (2007-2008) and Santiago Castro Gómez<sup>8</sup> (2007) have shown some resistance towards postcolonial criticism. In general, the reasons for this resistance can be deduced from the fact that the postmodern cultural, theoretical and political debates were not equally accepted on

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<sup>7</sup> See Dussel (1973; 1980).

<sup>8</sup> Mignolo proposes a problem of kinship between postcolonial criticism and postmodernity, since their theoretical grounds were Derrida, Lacan and Foucault, among others (2007, 26). This is evident for example in the writings by Said, Bhabha and Spivak. In fact, the group of intellectuals connected to the project modernity-coloniality claim the decolonial turn nourishes from other sources and differentiates from postcolonial criticism in a friendly way. Such sources are Waman Poma or Ottobah Cugoano. In them the experiences of being slaved and colonized can be thought of and discussed. This perspective is also read in *La opción de-colonial: desprendimiento y apertura. Un manifiesto y un caso* by W. Mignolo (2008).

the continent<sup>9</sup>. To most of them, these debates aligned themselves with demobilizing politics and conservative traits of metropolitan thinking. Due to the effect that did little justice to these discussions, the emergence in social theory of a new “post”, which was binded to colonialism, brought to an end, even before it had begun, a discussion that had otherwise been very valuable. Anyway, the effect was not permanent or lasting. Eduardo Mendieta has acutely pointed out Said’s Orientalism propelled the critical Latin-American discourses before a new “trans-American Latin critical community, which includes Fernando Coronil, Walter Mignolo, Santiago Castro Gómez and Ofelia Schutte” (2006, p.69) emerged in a second phase.

A reason closely connected to this discussion, and maybe fitting the historical dimensions at stake, has been provided by Walter Mignolo. He stated Latin America has been represented as an extension of Occident and, therefore, it never assumed the role of an entity characterized as absolute otherness, complex and faraway, as the imaginaries of Asia and Africa were perceived. It is interesting to observe most of the national independences were led by the Creole elites, who in different ways thought of themselves as part of the European historical emplotment (Mignolo, 1999, 2000a, 2007)<sup>10</sup>. In relation to this, it would be worthwhile noticing Coronil and Mignolo discussed on the category of Occidentalism and its criticism as post-Occidentalism. In this sense, it was clearly stated that the historiographical operations on non-metropolitan spaces needed to be examined under the light of coloniality at the same time epistemologies needed to be analyzed in order to account for the different ways in which that coloniality became part of

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<sup>9</sup> In the eighties, in Argentina for example, these discussions prospered. They involved those texts critical of modernity in postmodern code. They saw the possibility of disconnecting visions from Marxism which were over-integrated and keeping at the same time a critical weaving of subjectivity. See, for example, the compilation by Nicolás Casullo, titled *El debate modernidad posmodernidad* (1989). This book gathered a wide variety of readings ranging from visions celebrating the crisis of modernity, like Gianni Vattimo’s, to others thought in the emplotment of a powerful and vital modernity, present in the streets, like Marshall Berman’s. By that time there was no retreat of political discussion, but this was a later effect, derived from and aligned with the neoliberal scrapping. Early that decade, the texts by Jean Francois Lyotard and Jürgen Habermas (2006), among others, accompanied the discussions on the democratic transition. During the first years of the following decade, with the strengthening of neoliberalism, the moments of ambivalence and dissemination, which had shed light on debates, vanished and gave way to a sort of equivalence between postmodernity and the zone of acritical enjoyment. This situation became complex in intellectual environments where the reception of the “postcolonial” term was assimilated by demobilization and the textualism of certain postmodern readings. Luckily, everything goes by, even generalizations.

<sup>10</sup> Anyway it is worth noticing that discussions about national independences in the nineteenth century made present a myriad of options, among which some that did not make reference neither to the European historic trajectories nor to the complexity which deserves deep analysis. See Ramaglia, D. (2008) *Revolución e indigenismo en la independencia de América del Sur*.

common sense. The term coloniality, mentioned several times in this paper, results crucial to understand the plot of this discussion. It works as a criterion as well as a key concept to think the way in which the social relations and the production of colonial power project themselves beyond political independences<sup>11</sup>. In its conceptual function, coloniality allowed the study of, first, the ways of knowing in the colonial space and, second, of subjectivity, thought of in the format of philosophical discussion on Being. Thus, this concept slipped into two concurrent movements, which were the study of the silent work of discourses and the perception of the modern world as interdependent on coloniality. Then, it is understood coloniality was the enemy to be defeated in the struggles for cultural and political autonomy. That notion of colonial wound, which Mignolo borrows from Gloria Anzaldúa and projects into the history of Latin-America, gains (2007), in the context of coloniality, a wholly new dimension since what highlights the idea of wound is the fact it is still happening.

There is no much distance between these ideas and those of the thinkers of the national liberation and the decolonizing project, such as Fanon. In a feverish writing he proposed the disorganization of the colonial regime and its system of representations. He wrote about emancipatory policies for the regulations of the social being. Thus, the map of social languages and the dimension of the “colonial wound”, which marked the colonial body even to the point of substitution, were traced. Then, the inaugurated saga of a critical epistemology did not stop growing. The list of thinkers working for it is long and it gathers together ideas coming from the three continents. It is worth noting some aspects, considered briefly in this paper. To start with, if one is situated in Said’s works it is possible to notice they aim at drawing a discussion on the problem of the place where knowledge about the otherness is produced. In a symbolic ground this implied placing certain marks from which it would be possible to think against imperialism and its ways of subjectivization, but most importantly, it allowed the discussion on the nature of the postcolonial national state as well as the ways of knowing on history.

In Latin America, Enrique Dussel’s reflections became the fundamentals to think on how Hegel’s modern heritage conditioned a philosophical, political and cultural think-

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<sup>11</sup> See Aníbal Quijano, “Colonialidad del poder, eurocentrismo y América Latina” (2003) and “Colonialidad de poder. Cultura y conocimiento en América Latina” (2001).

ing. Roberto Fernández Retamar, in *Todo Caliban*<sup>12</sup>, making reference to the character in *The Tempest* by Shakespeare, proposed thinking on the impact of the colonizer's language to draw an emancipatory project. Even earlier, Edmundo O'Gorman's works, particularly *La invención de América* (1958) [The invention of America], warned the reader on America as an extension of the European imaginary. It is important to remember O'Gorman's writing were sources for Dussel's thought. This name list could be further developed. From the subaltern's margin the idea of provincializing Europe was developed by people such as Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000). This task implied giving back the European thinking a territoriality which, due to the effects of the colonial difference, had been abandoned as it became the universal equivalent for all the cultures and societies.

Mignolo's work moves comfortably in this context as it embraces most of Enrique Dussel's writings<sup>13</sup>. Mignolo made explicit the geopolitical dimension of knowledge and proved places of enunciation anchor the colonial difference<sup>14</sup> they are part of. Then, decolonization turns to be a problem of epistemological order, since it would imply, as essential part of its working, a radical revision of those processes that have given universal validity to categories and processes. Thus, the colonial difference shows coloniality does not derive from modernity, but its constituting plot does. If a modern emancipated subjectivity could be thought in some of the modern narratives, it was due to the existence of a "subhuman" co-narrative, a colonial non-subjectivity in action. In this issue, Fanon was a central landmark for the decolonial genealogy since he opened the double question on how appropriations are produced by the subaltern in the process of colonial difference at the same time he points to the critical dependence and tension in relation to that colonialism those subjectivities inhabit<sup>15</sup>. Mignolo's sources and questions, like those of most intellectuals related to the decolonial turn, have few differences with those postcolonial thinkers referred to at the beginning of this essay. This observation is meant to be positively considered since all of them are able to perceive the com-

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<sup>12</sup> This is reference to the fascinating Fernández Retamar's book, already quoted in the essay.

<sup>13</sup> In particular the work on analectics previously mentioned in this essay.

<sup>14</sup> This distinction appears in several works by Mignolo, particularly in *Local Histories/ Global Designs. Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking* (2000). (Translated into Spanish as *Historias locales/diseños globales. Colonialidad, pensamiento subalterno y pensamiento fronterizo*. Madrid: Akal, 2003)

<sup>15</sup> See Mignolo's introduction in De Oto, A. (2012). *Tiempos de Homenaje*. [Times of Tribute] (Own translation)

plex character of modernity and colonialism. It would be important to remember the core of the decolonial debates refers to the difference in the way of thinking the problem of modernity, as mentioned in a previous note. However, assuming the risk of overgeneralizing, it would be possible to observe that the dependence of postcolonial criticism in relation to post-structuralist thinkers does not hide the fact that politically organized questions in their works come from the nature of their thematic objects for reflection, i.e. colonialism and its practices. In other words, that theoretical bond could have been affected by the geopolitics of knowledge, implicit in this discussion about the theoretical dependence. If generalizing, it would be possible to state that field is less destroyed, especially when approaching concrete research problems. To a certain extent, it is a process in the textual scheme, in the syntactic operations of writing, and in the organization of sources. However, the problem locates itself in the fact that coloniality has moved in the order of the occlusion of historical and social processes in societies affected by colonialism in the name of those values invested by universality and representing the spatially and temporally situated version of the European historical development since the renaissance<sup>16</sup>. Therefore, that which would be possibly called the locality of knowledge regulates a cultural, historical and spatial culture. In that sense, there would be a dilemma to be faced, resulting from the fact that colonial and imperial differences mean distributions of objects and subjects of modern knowledge that challenge the emancipatory demands in a same structure. That is to say, in order to think emancipation, or even better, liberation, first it is necessary to know what to stop reproducing. How to solve this dilemma is still the big political and practical problem in terms of formulation. For this reason, among the varied tasks to carry out, it is of central importance to revise the ways of subjection and of production of social existence that the historical processes of colonialism and imperialism unfolded in each specific context.

As this exploration develops, other references appear as examples of difference with the hegemonic enunciation of modernity. For instance, the writing by W. E. B. Du Bois, the Afro-American intellectual, subtly embraced the racialization of social relations when accounting for the idea of the inadequacy of the black body for any form of explanation on the citizenship in the American society by the end of the nineteenth century

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<sup>16</sup> The central book for this discussion is Mignolo's (1995) *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization*.



and beginning of the twentieth. It was an inadequacy that made difficult any escape from the normalizing discourses on civility. Du Bois spent long years in that struggle which did not mean a diminution of the problem. Eventually, between the fifties' and the sixties', and aligned with Du Bois, Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched Of The Earth* insisted on the inadequacy by taking it to paroxysm. Consequently, this produced a question on the colonial body, now organized in a contingent and revisionist historicity. Fanon's question about what the black man wants is in itself a history of this inadequacy. The monstrous, the inadequate, that which never satisfies Western civility, has a register that exceeds several libraries and it is impossible to go through it all in this essay. Therefore, some marks are highlighted here. The Fanonian exploration on the imbalance of the colonized body in relation to colonialism points to a suspicion that may ultimately indicate some itineraries of criticism today. Fanon warned the reader that if those inadequacies which colonialism had produced in the bodies were projected into the historical space of national independences, there would not be any possibility of supporting decolonization. In an interesting article Lewis Gordon explored these perspectives in Sylvia Wynter, Irene Gendzier and Amartya Sen (2009). The problem of inadequacy appears also in Fernández Retamar's already quoted text *Todo Caliban*. Fernández Retamar states Caliban's inadequacy suggests that the categories built in the forties' to represent the emerging world after the Second World War were inhabited by ghosts of old colonialism. The author spoke about a change of words to continue enunciating the same (1998, pp. 124 – 125).

To sum up and draw a provisional way out for this proposed journey, it is suggested inadequacy works as a rest impossible to be reached, no matter the effort to make in relation to the white metropolitan society's system of values. In *Black Skin, White Masks* Franz Fanon, a key piece in the postcolonial/decolonial puzzle, would bring into discussion the impossibility of all ontology for the colonized black, by imagining certain impossibility at stake to constitute a subject of rights in the intricate weave of the colonial regime. Sometimes with sarcasm, some others with the purpose of description, others with irony, each page in this book goes through the structure of that edge colonial bodies were pushed into in the search of a system of values in the European and white world. Thinking in terms of performance, the colonized held the productive paradox of seeing himself obliged to desire this world and be, at the same time, unable to have access to it. Muscular tensions, dreams about persecution, fear and anger, even towards

fellows, would show as a result. Each page of the Fanonian texts knit the fundamental idea of the inadequacy of the colonized. If Fernández Retamar thinks something similar on Caliban, it is not by chance. For those like C. L. R. James, Aimé Césaire and René Depéstre among others, the very same idea of inadequacy, produced by the cultural narratives of colonialism and eventually by the neoclassical politics, provides a mark, i.e. a geopolitical location of revisionism first, and second, of a proposition directed to the organization of knowing, of knowledge itself and of cultural narratives.

Walter D. Mignolo (2007) emphasizes the idea of “Después de América Latina” [After Latin America] and of “decolonial” criticism. These can be clearly enclosed to some of the drifts presented here in relation to the notion of inadequacy. These drifts do not aim at a historiographical character, but a genealogical one from which any suspicion on sequence from the postcolonial criticism to the decolonial should be abandoned. Agreeing with Mignolo, it is possible to observe the term decolonial is challenged by the fact any vision of modernity, even that in Frankfurt thinkers’ rich textuality, cannot be explained without considering coloniality (Ibid., p.24). The fundamentals of the debate is located in the theory/theories needs/need to transcend European historicity, in the order of power, being and knowing, by locating itself/themselves in “inadequate” places, by the side of “inadequate” world experiences. It is the idea of a theory presented in the mode of the “damnés” that can be added to Mignolo’s argument. This would be gone through by the complex, tense, self-contradictory and conflictive field of the decolonization of modernity and of the contemporary experience (Ibid., p.25). Therefore, it would return to politics. The way is not exempt from risks. The visions of modernity/coloniality are inhabited by ambivalent figures like Caliban. It is worth asking if in this ambivalence, in the partiality all inadequacy reveals, there is no revisionist possibility for critical thought and political imagination. Thus, with the evidence of inadequacy, the task would be to decolonize. Mignolo, in the chapter “Después de América Latina” [After Latin America] of his book *La idea de América Latina* [The idea of Latin America], states the “post” connects the critical project with the same epistemological frame it aims at leaving and after “is the conceptualization from the sub-human construction of Latin America by Europe [...] [inadequacy] and by Latin America [...]; and the reconstruction of the concept of America to be based on the truth of Tawantinsuyu, Anahuac y Abya-Yala...” (p.224, own translation). Whether “after” really means it is not to be discussed in this essay.

Fanon, who works here like a genealogical connector, knew that the possibility of finding an emancipated world was mainly given by tracing other networks, other maps, beyond the colonial legacy<sup>17</sup>. His writing tensed representation and situated history and politics in particular locations. The favorite and at the same time, the most uncertain was the space of national culture, which still remains open in the Latin-American discussions and it offers itself as a field of connections between theoretical experiences of different origin, such as the philosophy of liberation, the theory of dependence, the decolonial turn and postcolonial criticism among others.

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<sup>17</sup> The following texts are suggested for further discussion: De Oto, A. Lugares fanonianos de la política: de la lengua al cuerpo y del cuerpo a la cultura nacional. [Fanonian locations of politics: from tongue to body and from body to national culture] in Frantz Fanon en América Latina, in press in “Centro de Estudios Culturales Latinoamericanos de la Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades de la Universidad de Chile” and -Beigel, F. (2006). See Bibliography Section.

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