

UC Merced

TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World

Title

“Coloniality is not over, it’s all over.” Interview with Dr. Walter Mignolo (Nov. 2014, Part II)

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1tc1k5g9>

Journal

TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World, 6(2)

ISSN

2154-1353

Author

López-Calvo, Ignacio

Publication Date

2016

DOI

10.5070/T462033560

Copyright Information

Copyright 2016 by the author(s). This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

“Coloniality is not over, it’s all over.” Interview with Dr. Walter Mignolo (Nov. 2014, Part II)

IGNACIO LÓPEZ-CALVO
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED

Ignacio López-Calvo: Continuing the end of the conversation in Part I (<http://escholarship.org/uc/item/1k41z3x1>) you seem to place some weight on the concept of "dewesternization". Could you talk more about why is important in your arguments?

Mignolo: I think that it is very important because what dewesternization is doing is stopping the possibility of a unipolar global order, which may end in of global fascism. Without dewesternization, the only option would be the implementation of neoliberalism. What stops the neoliberalists dream is precisely dewesternization. In 2011 or 2012, I participated in a World Public Forum (not the social forum but the public forum) that was created by Russia, China, and India. They meet every year in Rhodes, every October. They invited about 600 people, all paid. Three or four were from Europe and United States, and the rest from the rest of the world. The year I went there, I attended other panels and there was a common denominator: everyone was against neoliberalism, we need to stop neoliberalism was a common denominator. They were not against capitalism and development, but against neoliberalism. Which is a very important distinction to make, otherwise it would be difficult to understand dewesternization. Marxist arguments, in general, have difficulties in understanding the distinction between neoliberalism and capitalism. And that is due, in my view, to the fact that Marxism thinking is based on the same principles of Western modernity, of which neoliberalism is one of the latest manifestations. Or, if you wish, neoliberalism is the postmodern version of right-wing political theory. The World Public Forum is to dewesternization what the World Social Forum is to the Left. The World Social Forum is a reconfiguration of the Left (in its variegated versions and positions).

Addendum: Now at this point, December of 2016, what I said has to be rethought in view of recent election of Donald Trump as the next president of the US and his goal of “Make America Great Again.” His orientation, at least in words, turns away from globalism (the neoliberal project of Westernizing the world) towards Americanism, which runs parallel to Brexit. All that means a

division in the rhetoric of global designs, but it does it mean a change in the project of re-westernization, for I do not see in Trump's rhetoric and the team surrounding him an intent to let to US privileges in the global order. What Trump's rhetoric means, at the moment of growing tensions between dewesternization and rewesternization (e.g., the tensions with Russia, China, Iran and Philippines), is changing the politics of re-westernization and not, of course, to become the leader of a multi-polar global order. All of that has motivated the enthusiasm of some who see the end of globalization, and they locate the beginning by the 80s, with Reagan-Thatcher, US-Britain teaming up (followed up by their children, Bush-Blair). Well, from the history of the colonial matrix of power what we are witnessing is the end of globalism: the neo-liberal political project. The origination of globalization was the sixteenth century: for the first time in the history of the humankind, all land masses and water masses were interconnected. The leaders were Europeans. The end Carl Schmitt describes globalization at the inception of global linear thinking, and global linear thinking (Schmitt wouldn't say what follows) made a crucial contribution to the formation of the colonial matrix of power: that was the origination of international law, that I have argued in other writings. The crisis of globalism doesn't mean that the forces that promoted it will end. It means the end of the goals of globalism: to homogenize the world and establish a unipolar world order. The end of this dream reinforces the multi-polar world order, or, a multi-polar globalization. It remains to be seen what Trump's Americanization would means in a global multipolar order where the US will be one player, important player, but one not longer the coach and the captain of the team.

Ignacio López-Calvo: Coming back to the point you were making before the addendum, you said that there were about three people from Europe, there was no representation of Leftists from the US or Europe at all?

Mignolo: Richard Falk is a frequent collaborator of WPF (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_A._Falk). Also Akeel Belgrami, philosopher, based at Columbia University (<http://philosophy.columbia.edu/directories/faculty/akeel-bilgrami>) and of course Fred Dallmayr, current vice-president of the WPF (<http://politicalscience.nd.edu/faculty/faculty-list/fred-r-dallmayr/>). I am sure there were others from the US and certainly there were more invitees from Europe; but among the more or less 600 invitees, Western Europe and the US were in the significant numeric minority.

ILC: I was asking you this because you always mention that we have to keep in mind that coloniality not only happens in the Third World, but also within Europe and the US (suffered, for example, by Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Hawaiians). Puerto Rico and Hawaii are sort of US colonies and their people suffer coloniality.

Mignolo: Well, yeah. What we have to do is to distinguish different articulations of coloniality. Coloniality is a connector that is articulated in different ways. So, in case of the Latinos, in the case of Europe, the proper term is...

ILC: Internal colonialism?

Mignolo: Internal colonialism, yes, but not only that. Internal colonialism is nothing else than the re-articulation of coloniality of power. Internal colonialism in former Western Europe and today the core of European Union and in the US is not the same than internal colonialism in Nigeria, Argentina or India. What entangles the first group with the second is a power differential; that is what we mean by coloniality of power, so that the elites of the second groups of countries have to be subservient of the first. Take the Americas for example. With the exception of Haiti, the revolutions in North and South America, at the end of the eighteenth (US) and first half of the nineteenth centuries (South and Central America), were the revolutions of and managed (until today) by the population of European descent and they did what metropolitan colonizers did, but they did it as “natives,” that is “Creoles” born in America but of European descent. But the same happened in Asia and Africa in the second half of the twentieth century: decolonization ended up with “native” (in this case, natives of the land but not of European descent) elite replacing the colonizer. Now, there are always exceptions. One exception was the formation of the US that became a world leader state. The other was the Haitian Revolution, a revolution carried on by people that “were not supposed to,” according to the global imaginary. Nonetheless, the Haitian Revolution ended up in the logic of the modern and secular nation-State: they did not escape to internal colonialism although, a very difficult situation for Haiti did not have the same cloud in international relations than any or the other new republic in the Americas led by people of European descent.

ILC: I understand.

Mignolo: But beyond internal colonialism there is something else that is still difficult to grasp. You know, the imaginary of modernity is very strong and it is supported by a wealth of knowledge based on theology, secular philosophy and sciences (natural and social), the humanities, and more recently on the web, the invisible enslaved chains of the digital in all its manifestations, etc. So it is difficult to see beyond the increasing smoke screen that the mayor issue is the *hegemony of the colonial matrix of power* that, like the movie *The Matrix*, has all of us caught in its spider web. By this, I mean that hegemony is not located in the US today, in Britain yesterday or in Spain before yesterday. Hegemony is the underlying structure of management, it doesn't matter who is managing it. So, internal colonialism is just one corner of this complex structure of management and its historical mutations. And let me add this to which we may come back later: today there is a dispute for the management of the colonial matrix of power and that dispute defines dewesternization and rewesternization, the first led by China, the second by the US. The dispute, however, has two important aspects: one is that the dispute doesn't question the hegemony of coloniality, it disputes who manages it and secondly, the dispute that defines dewesternization is very different from the disputes within Western Civilization when the management moved from Spain to Holland, to England and France and then to the US; including, of course, the internal division today in the EU and the US (e.g., the rise of the extreme right, consequences of globalism, migrations, refugees, which are consequences of westernization in the past and rewesternization in the present). These were family feuds between Western Christians, theological and secular. All these family feuds and internal disputes were all part of the Westernization of the world, as Serge Latouche argued. China (and Russia) deviated from that, and this is one of the reasons why capitalism and neoliberalism are two different beasts. China and Russia are capitalist but not neo-liberal. If you tell me that they are consumerists, I would tell you that the critique of consumerism was already there in the nineteenth century. Gandhi supported Western critique of consumerism. That was liberalism, not neo-liberalism.

ILC: So how does Islam enter in this equation, because while Islam was always perceived as the enemy of Europe, the Orthodox Christians were seen for a long time also a great potential enemy for Western Europe.

Mignolo: Absolutely. That is the line that Samuel Huntington traced with *The Clash of Civilizations*, a line that divides Western Christianity from Orthodox Christianity and Western Christians from territories inhabited by people of Islamic persuasion. That line, significantly enough, went through Ukraine, a hole on the wall and the reason why Russia took up on Crimea after the march of Westernization supported the coup of the extreme nationalist right. Ukraine/EU/US and Crimea/Russia is a clear sign of the disputes for the control of the colonial matrix of power, between dewesternization and rewesternization. But the line of separations between Western Christians (Catholic and Protestant) is of a different nature from the line that divides Western from Orthodox Christians and the lines that divide Western Christians, on the one hand, and Orthodox Christians on the other, from Islam.

ILC: Let me change topics now. I mentioned at the beginning that I wanted to talk about some terms that you often use. One of the most polemical or perhaps misunderstood is “geopolitics of knowledge.” Isn’t there a danger of confusing the epistemological position of a person with perhaps their social or geographical position? For example, you can be an indigenous person in Bolivia and still emulate Eurocentric perceptions. You can also be an elite indigenous person in Bolivia. Your explanation is that it is one thing where you live and another, very different one, where you dwell. You can be live in the United States and have the perspective of South America, for example, right?

Mignolo: Right, yes, I made that argument a long time ago in 1991 in a couple of articles. But there are many people who understand clearly the implications of geopolitics of knowledge (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eORHKPkO2U4>). The modern and postmodern idea that knowledge is floating above the geo-historical formation of the colonial matrix of power is a very imperial assumption. The concept of the geopolitics of knowledge was first introduced to counter the idea that knowledge is Universal, that there is no epistemic location, that Immanuel Kant and Karl Marx had no location, they talk from nowhere for the entire humanity in the planet. As if they were not living and dwelling in a Europe that Hegel, in between both Kant and Marx, located as the center of the world and the present of time. Absurd assumption. You see, geopolitical location is not something that only affects indigenous or blacks, it affects also white European Christians like Kant or European Jews like Marx. Kant is located; his is not a universal proposal. Kant is German and lived in a certain time. His project was not determined by the land of Germany, but by the location of Germany in the world order. It is not by chance that after Kant comes Hegel. So he tells the story

of the spirit, which happened a long time ago in a distant space and that has now come to the Germany of the present, of central Europe, the center of world.

Geo-politics of knowledge denounces the fallacy and aberration of one geo-political location with the pretense to universality. When you hear a critique or debate on this, look at who has problem accepting epistemic geopolitics. That will tell you what is at stake. As for your example: if you were born in an indigenous or Afro-american community, that doesn't force you to be revolutionary. You can be Condoleezza Rice or pretend that you are indigenous like Ollanta Humala. But it is precisely geopolitics of knowledge that allows you to understand that what is located is knowledge and not the people who have the freedom to choose and become Condoleezza Rice or Martin Luther King, Ollanta Humala or Fausto Reynaga. See, this is the same problem that makes difficult for people to understand that the hegemony is of the colonial matrix of power not of the State that at a given moment was leading its management. All these misinterpretations can be explained by the narrow-minded formation of Western epistemology. Once you delink from it, it would be easier to understand what geopolitics of knowledge means and why the hegemony is not of a given State but of the colonial matrix. Living is something you do since you are born until you die. You have not chosen to exist. You just do. Dwelling is a different matter. It is your responsibility and therefore your ethics and your politics to choose where you dwell. Dwelling is the consequence of a project, of how you project your life. However, dwelling cannot be independent from living. And while living has a common ground for the human species (we need food, water, shelter, we regenerate), dwelling is living within a world of the imagination geopolitically structured by the colonial matrix of power.

Geopolitics of knowledge was followed up by another complementary concept—body politics of knowledge. Third World social conditions provoked or prompted them to come out. Returning to philosophy of liberation, Dussel, argued that it is not the same to be born in New York as it is to be born in Chiapas. That was in the 1970s. He was explaining what kind of knowledge is created where and why. Knowledge is not independent of the location of the bodies and institutions that embody and institutionalize it. You direct or are part of say a Kantian institute in Buenos Aires to help the Germans to disseminate the ideas of Kant or Marx. And you can have Marxists in Buenos Aires who do not mess up with a German Institute teaching Marx. But you could engage with other options, and you become Rodolfo Kusch before the decolonial option was conceived and helped us to understand the German Institute and Marxists oriented intellectuals in Buenos Aires as coexisting options. That is a case of thinking in and from Third World location (that is, geopolitics

of knowledge), because of the unavoidable confrontation with the hegemony of First World epistemic location. That is, geopolitics of knowledge unveils the power differential between geopolitical locations of languages, institutions, and actors

With the Civil Rights movement, body-politics came to the fore, not to be confused with bio-politics. Body-politics tell us how bodies have been controlled by the machinery of the nation-state since the end of the nineteenth century when the bourgeois ethno-class took over and displaced the Church and the Monarchies. Bio-politics tell us how bodies are managed but doesn't tell much about the bodies who managed the bodies. That is what body-politics does. That consciousness emerged with the Civil Rights movement. We were talking at the beginning of this interview about the consequences of the Civil Rights in the politics of academic knowledge, a wealth of disciplinary configurations emerged co-existing with the disciplinary architecture managing coloniality of knowledge in name of progress, development and modernization (that is, three concepts of the rhetoric of modernity). These emerging disciplines needed to delink from them in order to generate knowledge needed from the liberation of ethnicities and sexualities trapped in the racism and sexism of academic disciplinary configurations. Thus, women's studies, gender studies, African-American studies, gay and lesbian studies, Native American studies, Latinx studies. What are the goals of these emerging disciplinary configurations? To generate, disseminate, transform knowledge that the existing disciplinary edifice doesn't provide. And what for? For the liberation of the bodies that canonical disciplinary configuration kept hostage in the name of science, objectivity, excellence, innovation, and all that rhetoric. That is, body-politics emerged and complemented geopolitics; body and geo-politics that canonical discipline canceled in the name of objectivity and truth.

The last point I want to make refers to another criticism that people have made. They say, you know, the Indigenous liberation projects do not represent all indigenous people but who made those critiques never say that white projects represent all whites. The problem here is the modern and Western, and regional, concept of "representation," whether in the sense of representing (naming or describing) an event or object or being the representative (the one who speaks for) of a group of people. Why someone who is not Indigenous would see that Indigenous projects do not represent all Indigenous people and do not see that white hetero-normative option (which is only an option and not "the natural or the normal") does not represent all white males and females? Because the hegemony of Western epistemology becomes invisible of itself and only sees what is not Western epistemology. That is why I am saying that Western epistemology cancels both its own body and geopolitics. What you cannot deny, for instance, is that the project of CONAMAQ

(Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu) in Bolivia is an indigenous project, even if it does not represent every indigenous person in Bolivia; and even if many mestizxs join in the project because they do not find in their own ethno-class an option that satisfies them. I start talking about identity *in* politics, not to be confused with identity politics. Identity *in* politics means that you know that it's not an essential force, but it's a body-geo-historical location of the epistemic and political project you endorse, enunciate, and engage. That is identity *in* politics. When Fausto Reinaga said "I am not Indian, goddamit, I am Aymara. But you made me Indian and as Indian I will confront you," he is making an identity in politics statement addressed to the State classification. Simultaneously he rejected "peasant" because it is a social class (Marxist) classification while he was reclaiming his Indigenous identity.

ILC: You would be homogenizing all Indians.

Mignolo: I am not sure if you are saying that I am homogenizing all Indians. If that is what you said, no, I am not, on the contrary.

ILC: No, no, of course, I'm not saying that you are.

Mignolo: I am saying, "Indians" did not exist before Spaniards began to name the tremendous diversity of Pueblos Originarios, from Mapuches in Southern Chile, to Aymaras, Quechuas and Quichuas in the Andes, to Zapotecs, Tojolabales, Quiche, in Southern Mexico and Guatemala, to Osage, Lakota, Iroquois in US, to the diversity of First Nations in Canada. So, "Indians" is an imperial epistemic classification that homogenized the diversity of Pueblos Originarios. That is what Reinaga confronted and this is how I would paraphrase his statement: "You made me Indian, I am not Indian, and I am Aymara, but now as the Indian you made me, the identity you projected upon me, I will accept to fight you. But I know that Indian is not the way I identify myself. We are Aymaras not Indians."

ILC: So, what would be the difference between geopolitics of knowledge and situated knowledge?

Mignolo: Situated knowledge is a very specific version of white American feminism. It tells you that knowledge is not floating in the air but it is grounded some place. But it doesn't tell you much about

coloniality of knowledge. Situated knowledge emerged in the debates of white feminism confronting white patriarchy, and that of course, is fine with me, but it doesn't capture the feelings and the difference between knowledge situated in the Third World in a white or black or brown body and knowledge situated in the First World. In other words, geo-body politics of knowledge emerged in the frame of modernity/coloniality/decoloniality while situated knowledge emerged in the frame of white feminism in the US, another consequences of the Civil Rights movement. In the last analysis, situated knowledge and geo-body politics of knowledge are meaningful in their respective frames of meanings and not in reference to some kind of entity in the world that the respective expressions refers to. Now, both expressions emerged because up to that point, hegemonic knowledge was supposed to be floating in the air without relations to geo-historical and body-cultural configurations. Located knowledge emerged from feminist debates in the First World and geo-body politics of knowledge from political-epistemic debates in South America in the Third World.

ILC: The follow up is a personal question, so if you don't want to answer it, you don't have to, but I read one interview where you mention: "Yes, I was born in Argentina from Italian immigrants, but I moved to Paris to study in Europe, where I felt that I was being racialized as a *sudaca*. Later on, I moved to the United States and saw what it was being racialized as a Latino, Hispanic, or whatever you want to call it." So my question is the following: if you had chosen to stay in Argentina, would your writings be totally different then?

Mignolo: If Eskimos were living in the Equator, ice would not be an element around which they have to organize their lives. And so there will not be Eskimos. There is no secret here for me in that question. I have reflected on that through the years, every time I go back to Argentina. To make a long story short, I couldn't have felt border thinking in the body if I would have remained in Argentina, and therefore, would not have made connections between border thinking (border epistemology if you wish), modernity/coloniality and decoloniality. Certainly, I could have followed different routes: I could have denied what I felt and continue the rout of semiotics; or I could not have been aware of the feelings and emotions that took me to find the needs and the paths of what I am doing and writing. Most likely I would not have became aware of what immigrant consciousness means and comes to be in the modern/colonial global order. Briefly, your question is the question that Jorge Luis Borges addresses in *The Garden of Forking Paths*.

ILC: And you went to an elite institution too, the *École des Hautes Études*.

Mignolo: Sure, I went to a French elite institution. There were others who went to Lumumba University in Moscow, and I found a few who went to Poland and Belarus. Others went to Germany, like Felix Martínez Bonati, a generation before mine, and Santiago Castro-Gómez, a generation after mine went also to Germany. I wanted to go to France and be like the French intellectuals I was reading. I went to study semiotics, and semiotics was at that point in time for me the route to heaven. In Argentina, Córdoba and Buenos Aires, we were reading the intellectual debates in France, structuralism, post-structuralism, semiotics, discourse analysis. We, in Cordoba in the late sixties, knew about Fanon, we knew about dependency theory, we discussed Marx. But for me, the ticket was France, structuralism, post-structuralism, semiotics. When I came to the US with the experience of being perceived as a *sudaca* in France, and was classified as *Hispanic*, I felt a call, but it took me a while to understand what the call was about. It was Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderland/La Frontera*, which I read around 1988 that put all the previous experiences together. So, in relation with your previous questions, if I had remained in Argentina I would not have had the sensing and emotioning of being seen as *sudaca* and Hispanic and, consequently, would not have read Anzaldúa, unknown in Argentina until recently, and still known by only a few.

ILC: "Living in the hyphen," by Pérez Firmat.

Mignolo: Living in the hyphen was the talk of the town in US in the late seventies and early eighties. But for me, through Anzaldúa, it was the borderland, which was not restricted to nation-states or ethnic borders, which the hyphen captured. Borderland named for me a living in and between languages, memories, nations, ethnicities, and sexualities. Borderlands made me aware of *The Divided Self* (R.D. Laing) that I was reading in Argentina, which was a Western-modern-European Self that did not correspond with the Self I was sensing. It was not the border between sanity and madness that Laing explored, but the Self divided by the "border-line" (we could also say) that keep modernity/coloniality together and distinctive. Reading Anzaldúa prepared me to understand the geo-political implications of modernity/coloniality, that I discovered around 1995. So I realized I was Italo-Argentinean, what being Italo-Argentine during the Cold War meant: it meant being in the hyphen and in the Third World. That was a tremendous shift. There was another

interference at that moment, but it will take too long to explore it in details. So I just mention it: it was my reading of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, another person in the hyphen.

ILC: Very much so, yes. A mestizo. But he was and he was not. Sometimes he calls himself Indian, then he calls himself mestizo, and was proud of it, so he didn't have it very clear what he was, mestizo or Indian.

Mignolo: Right. He had to negotiate the culture of the mother, the history and memories of the Incas (so Indian), and being in Castile and writing for a Castilian audience and, on the other hand, recognizing that his father was Castilian (so mestizo). He dwelled in the borderland and in the borderline. What we know now is that "mestizos" in the early colonial period, sixteenth century, embraced the culture of the Indigenous mother (there are examples in Mexico too), while later on, "mestizos" embraced the culture of the European father. Garcilaso writes in a beautiful Castilian, while his memories are the memories of her mother and grandfather. Similar to Anzaldúa: a Mexican grounded memory expressed in an English language divested from the memories that English has for, say, William Faulkner.

ILC: Being the product of rape.

Mignolo: Right, but I am not aware of his own reflection of this. What I would add is that he was really aware of the ethno-borderlines. His own sensing of dwelling in the borderland awoke his understanding of Jews and Muslims in Seville, where he was living. He started by making an effort to understand León Hebreo before engaging in his own memories. It was after Garcilaso that I asked myself what kind of borderland experience nourished the life and work of Guamán Poma de Ayala. Whether he was Indigenous or mestizo, whether the "Ayala" was his father or a name he adopted for himself, it is again not explored in his work. What is obvious is his sensing that he was in the borderland/borderline between Andean (and not only Inca) cosmology and Castilian cosmology.

ILC: In a way, you followed in the steps of Julio Cortázar in the great argument he had with Arguedas after he said he had come to know his country from Paris. Was it the same experience for you?

Mignolo: Well, right, I think it's very similar. And I think that Dussel had a similar experience when he went to Spain and came to realize, well, it was not *sudaca* at that time, but that he was South American. He said that then he went to France and then Germany and realized: "The Northern I moved, the more Southern I was." So I think that Borges realized that too in Switzerland. His way he dealt with feeling the borderland was to confront Western epistemology. I wouldn't dare say he is decolonial, but obviously he was a border thinker and border dweller. Think of *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*. The most obvious Cortázar in this respect is *Axolotl*. And of course *Rayuela*, del lado de acá y del lado de allá, but as one of my students says, yes, Borges is decolonial.

ILC: Borges, of all people? I would have never thought of Borges as decolonial.

Mignolo: No, no, right. I do not dare to say that but José Luis Venegas, when he attended one of my seminars in 2001 or 2002, argued the point and went on to write his dissertation defending that argument. (<https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/indexablecontent/uuid:ace6064f-208a-47b5-aad3-bd7eb2442b4c>) At that time he was reading Joyce, Borges and Cortázar from a decolonial perspective. In the last analysis, Borges did an enormous critique of Western epistemology, and one day Foucault said "look what this Argentine guy is saying!" We could say, however, that Borges's writing is decolonial if we accept that decoloniality is not the privilege of a certain group of people but that the decolonial is a geo-political attitude confronting the hegemony of Western imaginary. In this sense, we could say that Borges's writing is decolonial while Foucault's writing is de-modernizing. His archive is limited to the regional European history, while Borges's archive is global and his starting point is always non-Western categories of thoughts. Later in his life when he wrote "The Ethnographer," it was a further reflection of the philosophical and epistemic explorations of his early years, *Ficciones*, for instance.

ILC: Yes, when Borges talked about the Latin American writer in his essay "El escritor argentino y la tradición."

Mignolo: Right, that is a very interesting example. To be an Argentine writer you do not need to talk about the pampas and the gauchos, Borges pointed out. So, this line of thinking took me to reframe writers, some of them I read early in my life, during high school, and others at the university. Think of Joyce and Beckett for example, Irish writers, and think about Irish long colonial

memories. Certainly, there is a difference between colonial Ireland and colonial India, for example. Thus, when we are reluctant to see Borges as decolonial, it is because we link decolonial with the experience of decolonization in Asia and Africa. Decoloniality, however, allows us to explore differential coloniality and therefore diverse decolonial responses. Think of Camus, for instance.

ILC: *Pied-Noir*

Mignolo: Yes, *Pied-Noir*. So that's very similar to my personal story. *L'Étranger*, read when I was teenager and read after my being in France and the US, illuminated different aspects of my sense of being in the world.

ILC: Do you think that Camus had empathy with Third World Struggles from the North? Or do you think that he really saw decolonization from the South, from Algeria?

Mignolo: He seems to believe in that tension with European French culture, let's put it that way. It is clear to me in *L'Étranger*. Mersault kills an Arab, a generic Arab. Mersault is not Franco-Algerian. I did not realize that when I read it for the first time. I did the second time, when I was aware of what coloniality does to ethnic, sexual, and national identifications. Arabs for Camus, I imagine, meant something similar to what Indigenous meant to me when still in Argentina: something different who inhabit the same country. Something different of being immigrant or pied-noir. What is revealing on this point, very revealing, indeed, is the magnificent novel by Kamel Daoud, *Mersault, contre-enquête*, published first in Algeria in 2013. Daoud tells the half of the story missing in Camus's magnificent novel: the story is told by the brother of the Arab killed by Mersault. Here you have a decolonial story telling that operates on a storytelling that is not pro-French imperialism (Camus), but the story told by a pied-noir that is himself blind to the meaning of being an "Arab" in Algeria in 1942, when Camus's novel was published. While being in Argentina, and identifying with Mersault for being foreigner, I was, like Camus, blind to the invisible presence of Indigenous and African-Argentine population. If I would have written a similar novel in Argentina where the main character kills an Indigenous person or an African-Argentine, now would be the moment in which an Indigenous or African-American writer could decolonize the story of an Italo-Argentine narrating his sensing of being foreigner. Modernity/coloniality is experience at many levels, and so are decolonial responses.

ILC: And Jean-Paul Sartre had a similar view, right?

Mignolo: Similar views you mean to Camus? Sartre was a French-Jew and it was his Jewishness—I venture to guess—that make him sensible to Fanon’s decolonial call. What I really admire in Sartre, in spite of Fanon’s right disagreement about Sartre’s *Black Orpheus*, is the Sartre who wrote the preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*. Sartre, in the preface, addresses the French (and by extension, European readers) to make them aware that Fanon is no longer addressing the European audience, of which Fanon doesn’t care much about; he is addressing the wide Third World readers engaged in the struggle for decolonization. For if European had much to do in their colonizer enterprise, Fanon was clear about the fact that European has nothing to do with decolonization. Decolonization (now decoloniality) is not a master plan that you elaborate from the experience and memories of Western Europe (and since 1945 of US), and expand all over the world, telling non-European people that they have been colonized and it is time for them to wake up and decolonize. Fanon puts an end to that modern prejudice and Sartre was a European who understood it.

ILC: Yes. In the preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*, Sartre expresses even more anger than Fanon!

Mignolo: But you see, this is the anger of a European with their fellow Europeans. While Fanon is the anger of an Afro-French-Caribbean who knows what it means to live in France and witnessed colonial France in Algeria and sensed the dignified anger of Algerian fighting for their liberation.

ILC: However, don’t you think it’s ironic that he states in the prologue that Fanon’s book doesn’t need to be validated by a white European and yet what he is doing is precisely that: giving it his stamp of approval for European readers?

Mignolo: Right, right, you can always do this kind of deconstructive reading. He needed to say that it did not need validation, but if he had not endorsed Fanon in his preface, no one in Europe would’ve paid attention. If you want to follow the deconstructive logic, you can say that Sartre needed to say to his European readers that Fanon is not writing for them because Fanon was not saying that he was not writing for European readers: *he was doing it without saying it*. So, for Fanon, it was irrelevant whether Europeans read him or not. It was relevant for Sartre, and that is one of the reason he wrote the preface—it was relevant for Sartre to make European readers that they are not

being addressed because Fanon himself was not doing it, and he was not doing it because did not care about. I think that Sartre, at that very moment, was into this kind of reflections. I always ask my graduate students *The Wretched and Sartre*. And one of the reasons I do it is (this probably has happened to you too) very often white students, male and female, once they begin to understand the decolonial question, ask: “How can I be decolonial?” What can I do, to be decolonial? My response is that you do not need to be decolonial, but if you want to start thinking from the geo-body politics of knowledge and reflect on Sartre’s preface to Fanon

ILC: Linda Alcoff has an article, “The Problem of Speaking for Others,” which actually answers that question.

Mignolo: Exactly, you don’t have to “become” Black, or an Indian, or Third World, of gay or lesbian, etc. We are all in the colonial matrix of power. The question is to be aware of how we have been classified, be aware of each of us, of any color including white or any gender or sexual preferences, including heterosexuality, whether we have some privileges, and start building from there: from your way of sensing the world, from your geo-body political emotioning, when you feel the classification or you are not aware of it because you are among those who classify.

ILC: Earlier we were talking about Guamán (or Waman) Poma de Ayala and I’ve noticed that you and other decolonial thinkers always mention their/your predecessors. Sometimes you have mentioned Guamán Poma, Mariátegui, Aimé Césaire, Fanon, Rigoberta Menchú, Gloria Anzaldúa. Would Waman Poma be the earliest you can go for the decolonial perspective? Would he be the first one, from your point of view?

Mignolo: Yes, from what we know. It cannot be from the fifteenth century because the conditions were not there, neither in Spain nor in the Andes. We cannot find decolonial defiances before the sixteenth century for the simple reason that modernity/coloniality (or if you wish, the colonial matrix of power) was not in place. There was no coloniality to respond to. The point is not whether Guamán Poma is the first, which is a very Western and modern way of chronological identification and privileges. We can mention also the Taky Onkoy, which was not an author, but a collective response to the emerging coloniality of power and the emerging colonial rhetoric of modernity. There are others in Mexico (like Ixtlilxochitl, although not as radical as Guamán Poma), and sure

other instances that we do not know yet. But what I would say is that for decolonial thinking, Guamán Poma is the equivalent of Aristotle and Plato for the Western construction of the idea of Western thinking and Western Civilization since the Renaissance.

ILC: But couldn't it be a Moor from Granada during the last phase of the Reconquest, when they are being expelled from Granada by the Catholic Kings? Wouldn't it be a similar situation? At the time, Spanish Christians had the same system of *encomiendas* in the Iberian Peninsula as well.

Mignolo: That is an interesting question. True that the *encomiendas* system was not invented in the New World but transplanted. It is also true that there is a significant amount of writing by Moriscos, *Leo Africanus*, supposedly a Berber, is perhaps the best known. And it is also, not morisco, but a Black Ethiopian, *Juan Latino*, who became professor of Latin. An interesting parallel with Juan de Espinosa Medrano (El Lunarejo) in Cuzco, seventeenth century, who followed a similar trajectory, supposedly of Indigenous lineage. Although all these characters have in common their experience of dwelling in the border, Guamán Poma so far is unique in the articulation of his response. I am slowly working on a short book tracing the genealogy of decolonial political theory: Guamán Poma in the sixteenth-seventeenth century, Ottobah Cugoano in the eighteenth-century Africa-Caribbean-England; Mahatma Gandhi, India-London-Durban-India, in the early twentieth century and Frantz Fanon, Martinique-France-Algeria, in the twentieth century. The point of the argument is also to show the geo-body dimension of decolonial political responses.

So, returning to the sixteenth century, it could be that some equivalent to Guamán Poma de Ayala could be identified in the Iberian Peninsula. If that is the case, some caution shall be taken. First, it is not a question for me where and who is the first. Secondly, being expelled from the Iberian Peninsula is not the same that having actors and institutions from the Iberian Peninsula dismantling. Certainly, Moriscos and Conversos in the Peninsula were left dwelling in the borderland/borderline. And we could also look for equivalents to Ottobah Cugoano, the African enslaved who after working as slave in the Caribbean went to London with his master Campbell. All in all, I think what your question invites to think are two co-existing moments:

- a) the meaning of Reconquista
- b) and the meaning of Conquista

Reconquista means to recover a territory that was taken, while Conquista means to conquer a territory. Thus, what we shall think about is what does it mean to be a Morisco, a Converso or a Black in the Iberian Peninsula, and what does it mean to be Indigenous and Black in the Americas.

Third, the names we who follow Quijano's steps, invoke as our decolonial ancestors are names that have behind them the memories and the wound of Conquista and Colonization in the Americas. It would be up to you, or Iberians en general, if you are interested, to reflect on potential decolonial Morisco and Converso ancestors after the Reconquista. This is precisely when geo-body politics come to the fore since the historical configuration of the Iberian Peninsula, its role in Europe and the Renaissance is not only different but there is a power differential between European experiences of whatever ethnic, gender/sexual alignment you find yourself in, and the ethnic, gender/sexual alignment you find your self in in the Americas.

ILC: Yes, if you think about it, the Spanish conquest of the Americas is a continuation of the *Reconquista*. The concept is pretty much the same.

Mignolo: Right, but with the difference that Reconquista means recovering your territory while Conquista means appropriating other territories. Castilian in Castile are not the same than Castilians in the Americas (or *Indias Occidentales* as they called them). What is important is the articulation of modernity, coloniality and decoloniality, which are three words in one complex concept. If, for me, Guamán Poma is a decolonial response to modernity/coloniality it is because it responds to Conquista (not to Reconquista) and colonization (not to expulsion, that was the experience of Moors and Jews, and moriscos and conversos who remained in the Peninsula). So, here are the most important issues to think about in parallel: before the Reconquista, Indigenous Castilians (and Iberians in general) were in a position similar to that of Guamán Poma de Ayala and the Andean Indigenous population. Is there any Castilian or Iberian that has taken a position against the Muslims, as Guamán Poma did against Spanish Christians?

ILC: Postcolonial studies locate the beginning of modernity in the eighteenth century and the Enlightenment, whereas most Hispanic thinkers, especially decolonial thinkers, locate the beginning of modernity in 1492 with the arrival of Columbus to America. According to you, this year signals the beginning of racism.

Mignolo: As we understand it today.

ILC: Yes, as we understand it today. You have mentioned that in order to colonize and enslave people, first you have to dehumanize, animalize them. But, for example, in the seventh century, when Arabs leave the Arabian Peninsula and conquer all of North Africa, they took thousands of slaves, many of them are Europeans, kidnapped from the coast, or from their ships, and they asked for ransoms. Wouldn't that also be a sort of earlier racism?

Mignolo: Romans were imperial, Incas were imperial, Aztecs were imperial, but they were not capitalists; it was a different political and economic configuration. So in the case of race, as we know it today, there were two crucial moments in the sixteenth century. One is religious: the expulsions, we have Christianity and then, we have the "bad guys," the "wrong" religions, the Jews and Moors. When Covarrubias is talking about the concept of *raza*, he relates race to horses *los caballos, pura raza*. And then, he adds: also said of Jews and Moors. That is a kind of one leg. North Africans were not involved in building the colonial matrix of power. They were expelled from it and by it.

When Spain (Castilians and Iberians) comes to America, they have to deal with indigenous population. In the Spaniards' view, they have no religion. They have to deal with Africans too. And they have no religion either, according to Europeans. They invented Indians (for there were no Indians in America, they were Indigenous, as Indigenous as the non-Arab-Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula who occupied a place similar to the one occupied by Iberians in the New World. Similarly, to the North African buying, selling enslaved people, before 1500, the Chinese made distinctions between the people at the center who made the distinction and people in the margins who were distinguished: those who live in the center and those who live far from the center. The Aztec, the Inca, the Greeks did the same. But the question is that their classification was not related to capitalism.

Racism, as we know it today, is a certain type of classification used to expropriate land and to exploit labor, to turn people into commodities, like slaves, and to reinvest the surplus to increase production of whatever. The most radical difference from previous classifications is that for the first time in the history of human civilizations, human life became dispensable. And that has to do with putting economic benefit first and human lives second. None of the previous civilizations made "inferior" people dispensable; not even the Greeks. What does it mean to be dispensable? It is to turn humans into commodities. Once you use it, you can throw it away and you bring another one.

Dispensability of human life is the basic consequence of racism from that point in history until today. This is connected to the question of the nation state: the ones who do not belong within the nation are not considered human beings; the rest are dispensable life. You see how dispensable life is linked to racism and to the historical foundation of capitalism, on the one hand. And, on the other hand, the emergence of the modern, secular, and bourgeois nation-state makes non-nationals bare life. Hannah Arendt and Giorgio Agamben called the consequences of legal State politics of extermination “naked life” or “bare life.” This is different to enslavement. The purpose of enslavement was not to exterminate people. On the contrary, people were needed for labor exploitation and for buying and selling “commodities.” You have these two parallel histories of the economy and the State. The first makes life dispensable by commodification and labor exploitation, and the other makes live dispensable by extermination of non-nationals. Two crucial elements in the formation of the colonial matrix of power: racism connected to the economy (slavery) and racism connected to the State (genocides of different configurations).

ILC: So in one way, the Shoah, all the Jews and non-Jews killed in the Nazi Holocaust, was the ultimate consequence of the creation of the nation-state taken to the maximum degree.

Mignolo: That’s my view. I have unfolded the idea in a couple of articles.

1) <http://scholarworks.umb.edu/humanarchitecture/vol7/iss2/7/>

2) https://www.academia.edu/8171882/Zionism_decolonizing_the_state-form

ILC: I had never thought of that.

Mignolo: Rolando Vázquez and myself initiated a Summer School in Middlebury and for the first two years, the theme was coloniality, slavery, and the Holocaust (<http://www.interamericanstudies.net/?p=935>). The purpose was to let the student know that it is false to understand slavery as something related to the Atlantic and the Holocaust as something related to Europe. No, they are connected. They are both the costs of modernity, its rhetoric of salvation, coloniality, the logic of exploitation, extermination, deseability of life in general, including the human species (which now is the question of environmental crisis). They are all connected, but the rhetoric of modernity orients our attention to one thing in particular and erases

the network upon which the colonial matrix of power was built and it is maintained, although today its management is disputed (China, Russia, Iran, BRICS countries).

ILC: So the Holocaust is applying the same things Belgians did to people in the Congo, but now to Europeans. Europeans were doing to other Europeans what they had done in the colonies.

Mignolo: That is the way that Aimé Césaire saw it, when in 1955, he said that what Europeans can't stand is not the killing of Jews and non-Jews under Nazism, but the fact that they killed white people with the same techniques they applied to people of color. That is what the bourgeois find difficult to swallow, to process, according to Césaire.

ILC: That is why a genocide in Balkans is stopped from the beginning, but in Rwanda it is left until it ends. It is not perceived as equally important.

Mignolo: Right, right! In a way, the genocide of the Herero carried out by the Germans in Namibia was an experiment for what happened later with Hitler and the Nazis. And as you point out, and here the geo-body politics of knowledge comes to the rescue, people in Rwanda are Black people, descendent of Ham. The Balkans are different from the Holocaust, and it has to do with the history of Jews and Muslims after the Reconquista. In the Balkans, the conflict was between Western Christians, Orthodox Christians, and Muslims. So, Muslims were not considered white and Europeans, as the Jews who remained in Europe after the expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula. On the other hand, by the time of the Balkans War, the situation of Jews had changed. The foundation of the State of Israel legalized Jews in Europe, while Muslims continued to be outcasts. Perhaps, the reason to end the conflict sooner was that the Balkans are in wider Europe and also, there is a significant population of (white) Western Christians.

ILC: Changing the topic, Michaelson and Scott Cutler Shershow, in their 2007 article "Rethinking Border Thinking" have accused you of "erecting a new metaphysically essentialist binary between Europe and its colonies, and of romanticizing Amerindian cultures." What is your reaction to these comments?

Mignolo: I think their article is a defense of Derrida and Derrideanism. The first sentence of the article is something like that, “For better or worse, Mignolo’s local history of global design has a sizable influence...” When I read this sentence, I said, ok, let’s see from where the bullets are coming. From that introduction, I saw what they misunderstood or maybe that they don’t want to understand. Regarding metaphysic essentialism, I have stressed identity IN politics. I take Fausto Reynaga’s dictum seriously here. I mentioned this before but let’s repeat it here: I am not Indian, I am Aymara, but you made me Indian, so as Indian you would have to stand me. The Americas is the only place in the planet where Indian and Indigenous are exchangeable. Both, Indian and Indigenous are European classifications of certain people living outside of Europe. It entered European vocabulary and epistemology towards 1640.

[indigenous \(adj.\)](#)

“born or originating in a particular place,” 1640s, from Late Latin *indigenus* “born in a country, native,” from Latin *indigena* “sprung from the land, native,” as a noun, “a native,” literally “in-born,” or “born in (a place),” from Old Latin *indu* (prep.) “in, within” + *gignere* (perfective *genui*) “beget,” from PIE root **gene-* “to produce, give birth, beget” (see [genus](#)).

I was trained as philologist, so I believe that language produce ontologies. I suspect Michaelson and Scott assume that Indigenous names what there is and not what they see. Now, if you take the definition of Indigenous literally, Europeans are Indigenous too. For if they are not Indigenous, where did they come from? See, there is no essentialism here, that is a postmodern critique that misses their own Western essentialism (Greece and Rome, Greek and Latin) and they romanticize Western Civilization and the Enlightenment’s belief as universal. Briefly, they missed the point, but that is fine because decolonial thinking works on a different track, parallel to postmodern assumptions and arguments. The critique is useful because it shows their own shortcoming and misunderstanding or bad faith. In other words, they are talking about themselves through the critique of my work. As it often happens, the accuser hides (willingly or not) the same sin he is charged to the accused. Sor Juana understood in her own experience the logic of the accuser: “Hombres necios que acusáis a la mujer sin razón, sin ver que sois la ocasión de lo mismo que juzgáis.”

ILC: Going back to the terms you used, let me see I understand what you mean by “the body politics of knowledge.” It is the resistance that the population has against what Foucault called

biopower or biopolitics. So if that's what it is, would you consider the *Indignados* movement, the Occupy movement, the Arab Spring to be examples of body politics of knowledge?

Mignolo: I link body-politics more to a project or projects of what I call the global political society. I see the *indignados*, all these other uprisings, as a politicization of civil society. The question is that body politics are arguments built around the control of the bodies that don't want to be controlled, while these uprising are collective manifestations against the abuses of the state, any kind of abuse. Not necessarily racial and sexual thing, but more of a social loss of privilege and the realization of corruption and abuse by the state. They realize that the state is not really working for the nation. It's what I call the politicization of civil society. I would put that in a different kind of channel. Body-politics refers to a radical change of terrains, a shift in the geography of sensing, knowing and believing embodied in projects and orientations of the emerging global political society, which is not the same than the politization of the civil society that you see in the *indignados*, North African *intifadas*, etc. Bio-politics unveil the politics of the State to control the pollution that Foucault locates at the end of the seventeenth century. Before the strategy of the States were theo-political, that is, bodies were controlled through the control of souls and souls were controlled by theological regulation of conducts. Body-politics refers not to State control strategies, but to the strategies of liberation of bio-politics. However, bio-politics works by means of discourse establishing rules and beliefs (that is, it has an epistemological foundation), body-politics doesn't consist in massive protests and manifestations, but in the analytic of coloniality of knowledge managing colonial bodies by racial and sexual classifications and, on the other, by building a decolonial knowledge and understanding that liberates the body (racially and sexually) from the universal fictions of Western modernity.

ILC: What is the connection between Mariátegui and the decolonial project?

Mignolo: First, it should be clear that the decolonial project we are talking about here and the one I am engaged in, is one decolonial project grounded on Quijano's framing of modernity/coloniality/decoloniality. There are several others at this point and each decolonial projects has its own grounding in the specific colonial memories that nourishes them. For instance, African decolonial projects are grounded in long and diverse colonial history of Africa and the decolonial struggles (in North and Sub-Saharan Africa) during the Cold War. Decolonial projects in

the Caribbean have a different grounding in the Middle Passage. The diversity of decolonial projects among Pueblos Originarios (that European called Indians and Indigenous) from Mapuches in Southern Chile all through the Andes, Central and North America, have their own experiences of modernity/coloniality, etc. José Carlos Mariátegui was neither Indigenous nor of African descent, which means that his experience of colonialism was that of a person of “mestizo” in the large sense of the word. And neither was he the son of immigrants, like for example Rodolfo Kusch was, or Enrique Dussel or myself.

Mariátegui understood colonialism at the crossroads of Spain colonial history and legacies in the Andes, that is, the colonial history managed by Spaniards and the Republican history controlled by Creoles and Mestizos, whose education was a mixture of Spanish colonial legacies and Creole and Mestizos’ attraction for the new imperial configurations led by Britain and France. That is, Mariátegui belonged to the population of non-European European in the South American Andes. Thus he understood the long lasting exploitation of Pueblos Originarios by Spaniards first and by Creoles and Mestizos after independence. But above all, he understood quite clearly that the racism was connected to the question of land tenure. With this crucial statement, Mariátegui placed the “Indian question” at the crossroads of racism and Marxist political economy. But because Marxism was built on the European experience and, for Marx, racism was not a question, Mariátegui was marginalized by the communist party. So here is one line that connects Aníbal Quijano to the fundamental role of race and racism in the formation of the colonial matrix of power.

On the other hand, Mariátegui knew and understood the insertion of British imperialism after Peru and Andean countries built their own Republics (e.g., nation-states), he understood and experienced in his territory, the growing influence of the US in the South in conflict with British and French interests. He was very aware, since he endorsed Marxism, of the recently formed Soviet Union after the Russian Revolution. Briefly, Mariátegui understood quite well that the local history of the Andes was entangled with the global history of Western imperialism. It was to understand that the Soviet Union belonged to the same logic and that the Revolution only changed the contents, but not the terms, of modernity/coloniality. So, the second line that connects Quijano (and all of us following Quijano’s steps) with Mariátegui is to understand that coloniality is not something regional (like “Latin American coloniality”), but that coloniality is global and, more important, it has been seen and conceptualized not longer from Europe or Anglo US, but from the South American Andes. So, those are some of the connections between modernity/coloniality/decoloniality and Mariátegui. I explored some of these issues in my article “Mariátegui and Gramsci in ‘Latin’

America. Between Revolution and Decoloniality.”
https://www.academia.edu/8171868/Mariátegui_and_Gramsci.

ILC: But wouldn't this be a sort of so-called vulgar Marxism, of Marxist economic reductionism? You cannot reduce the Indian problem to the land because, as you said yesterday, knowledge is also very important, and the control of knowledge was in the hands of the *Criollos*. So wouldn't this separate Mariátegui from the decolonial project?

Mignolo: On the contrary. Marx and followers did not see racism but classism. Did they not see the relations between racism and exploitation of labor and racism and expropriation of land. Racism and exploitation of labor brought about massive enslavement of African human beings. And expropriations of land (that started with the *Requerimiento*) were legitimized by declaring that “Indians” were like children and women, they did not know how to govern themselves and were not aware of the meaning of private property. This is quite un-orthodox Marxism in my view. And that is also the step that Quijano followed distancing himself from Marxism and place “race/racism” as one of the fundamental pillars of the colonial matrix of power. So, we are no longer here talking about Marxism, but detaching ourselves from it. But that is what Mariátegui already did, not on purpose, but understanding that in the Andes the question was not the exploitation of the proletariat (social class), but that it was expropriation of Indian lands and for that, dehumanization was necessary. Racism is not a question of social class but of social classification, which is the basic assumption of Quijano's uncovering and unfolding the colonial matrix of power.

ILC: Why do you see Western cosmopolitanism as a homogenizing and universalizing project to continue rewesternization? Does it coincide with the imperial project of globalism, aimed at eliminating cultural differences?

Mignolo: Cosmopolitanism is Western cosmopolitanism, as formulated by Immanuel Kant in the eighteenth century. No other civilization I know of was concerned with cosmopolitanism. So, Western cosmopolitanism worked as a justification of Western expansion, or, if you wish, global designs to westernize the world. Cosmopolitanism was complemented by other concepts, like “progress and civilizing mission” under British and French banners. And then, by “development and modernization” under the US banner after WWII. And “globalism,” which was the second stage of

development and modernization. Development and modernization was a liberal project, globalism the neo-liberal version of a long and growing rhetoric of modernity. But when the cycle of Westernization closed at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and the US began to lose credibility with the presidency of Bush-Cheney, China was gaining ground rapidly and Russia was recomposing itself, Barack Obama's first move was to engage in a campaign of Re-westernizing the world, that is, to regain the prestige and credibility that the US gained, during the twentieth century, as the necessary state to maintain world order and peace. Too late. Too late for two reasons: the control of the colonial matrix of power was under dispute, China, Russia, Iran, the BRICS already realized that they do not want to be told what to do. And secondly, and because of that, "cosmopolitanism" was displaced beyond the North Atlantic by expressions such as "dialogue of civilizations." You see, the expression means that imperial cosmopolitanism (Kantian legacy to Obama's presidency) is no longer viable. Dialogue of civilizations was coupled with other expressions such as "multipolar world order," displacing the unipolar world order that led to the invasion of Iraq and all the consequences after that. So, yes, globalism is built on Western global designs of which Kantian cosmopolitanism one version (before then, since 1500 at least, was Christianization of the world), globalism was the latest. All intent to eliminate differences, of course. Dialogue of civilizations and multipolar world order are projects reclaiming the differences. "Cosmopolitan localism," a chapter of *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, explores some of these issues. For what is the benefit of homogenizing under cosmopolitanism and globalism if not to secure the benefits of those who proclaim, defend and advance cosmopolitanism and globalism?

ILC: Why do you think it was so difficult for Karl Marx and Engels to see coloniality/decoloniality?

Mignolo: Because they were in the belly of the beast. They were not sensing and experiencing coloniality as coloniality as it was experienced by Pueblos Originarios and by enslaved Africans in the colonial period; they were not sensing and experiencing what Chinese experienced with the Opium War and Indians were experiencing with the British invasion and dismantling of the Mughal Sultanate, the conflict created between Muslim and Hindus that ended up, after 1947, in the partition between India and Pakistan; because they were not sensing and experiencing what Black South Africans were experiencing with the British and Dutch invasion of their territory; because they were not sensing and experiencing with Black African sensed with the German invasion of Namibia; because they have not experienced and sensed what North Africans experienced with the

French and British invasions. Marx and Engels understood (did not feel or sensed) the classist exploitation of the proletarians (while they were not proletarians), like Mariátegui understood the racist exploitation of the Indians (while not being himself and Indian). Marx was Jewish but after his initial publication of the Jewish Question, he did not pursue the racist question in Europe (connected above with the sixteenth century). But perhaps being Jewish made himself sensitive to people being undermined. As for Engels, perhaps like Mariátegui, being a dissident of his own ethno-social class. All of this takes us back to geo-body politics of knowing, sensing and understanding is of the essence in decolonial thinking and universal fictions are out of business, they already run their course and did significant damage, from the left and from the right (<http://eipcp.net/transversal/0112/mignolo/en>).

Note: I would like to thank Dorie Perez for transcribing this interview.