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Author

Gomez Herrero, Fernando

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Mignolo, Walter D., Rita Segato, and Catherine E. Walsh, eds. *Aníbal Quijano: Foundational Essays on the Coloniality of Power*. Duke UP, 2024. pp. 496.

FERNANDO GÓMEZ HERRERO
UNIVERSITY OF SALAMANCA

Aníbal Quijano: Foundational Essays on the Coloniality of Power (Duke UP, 2024) is a must-read book for all English-language readers seeking to make their first acquaintance with the outstanding figure of the Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano (1928-2018). It is also an excellent occasion for those willing to insist on the acquaintance, ideally revisiting the Spanish-language originals written mostly in the 1990s and 2000s. Discovery of new texts and insights is certain. Mine was the great essay “Don Quixote and the Windmills in Latin America” (chapter 9), dwelling on the crucial notion of heterogeneity repeated throughout the volume. Here we have twenty chapters gathered in one useful and handsome volume that is close to 500 pages. It will keep you busy a few evenings and I dare say that Quijano’s ghost will keep you company a few more evenings in the years to come. We receive these essays three decades later, almost like an omen, amid fresh predicaments and major upheavals informing the world of politics at large and also the small world of the social sciences and the humanities in the already baptized Age of Trump. From my observation platforms, I would signal three chronologies: the 1960-1980s in the original Peru setting of military dictatorship and the Sendero Luminoso guerrilla fighting with sixty thousand victims (243); the 1990s, or the association with Immanuel Wallerstein in the U.S.; and the late 1990s and the 2000s, or the association with Walter D. Mignolo, also in the U.S., who, almost Don King-like, became the biggest promoter of Quijano to this day. The localized intensity of the clash of identified social groups in the original Peruvian setting acquires a sweeping historical vision of imperial and colonial world systems in the last five hundred years, and eventually we land in the formula of “global coloniality of power” (endnote 2, 390). These foundational essays are included in the series “On Decoloniality” by Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, published by Duke University Press. The dance of the prefixes had already begun in the 1990s (pre-, proto-, post-, para-, de-, etc.) in the vicinity and the vindication of the “colonial” dimension with an inevitable eye on “America” and the “West,” both inevitable and insufficient categories to be sure, allegedly now in disrepair and decline.

Terminology matters. While “coloniality” is not to be confused with “colonialism” (127), and is not to be placed exclusively within pre-national Latin American frames, “race” cuts through the centuries and is not to be confused with and simplified into conventional Anglo-American taxonomies of “color” (130-31, 213). The big noun, “history” does not have to be linear and one-directional, dualist or evolutionist; read: Eurocentric (265, 276). Add “West” qua teleological, class-patrimonialist, or nationalist in boundaries and intentions, not the exclusive plaything of historians in history departments. Now we are dealing with processes such as “Europe” and “Latin America” and others not necessarily cartographic (97, 128, 252), but it is the totality of the field of vision that matters and, as Quijano says, perhaps marginality sees better those global processes. These essays acknowledge the legacy of destruction and genocide in the history of the Americas (211, 261, 387) and comes out of that acknowledgement with a future vision that may not yet be forthcoming two or three decades after these essays were written. Underline power politics, the big nations and the big institutions in particular, and politics of knowledge production in relation to the social sciences (the humanities are marginal in Quijano’s vision, as far as I can see, and “The aesthetics of utopia” (chapter two) is a minor piece). Yet, the storm is not only circumscribed to the tea cup. This pisco sour is abundant and strong, and will go to your head all for the better.

It was at Duke where I made my first acquaintance with Quijano’s essays (Mignolo was my dissertation adviser in the 1990s). The “Latin,” or Other, portion of America was always already there in the “glorious decade” of superpower unipolarity now looked back with nostalgia by liberal imperialists (“idealists” like G. John Ikenberry and Peter Trubowitz, and less so by strategists of hegemonic forces, the so-called “realists” like John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt). Although Quijano was already circulating inside U.S. borders among cultural studies and postcolonial studies in the vicinity of Spanish-speaking sectors in U.S. academia, his name was not yet included in the important conference at Duke University that culminated in another handsome volume, *The Cultures of Globalization* (Duke UP, 1998), edited by Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi. I mention it because the split among the postcolonials with postmodernism was already perceptible in such a conference. Quijano includes the term postmodernism in this volume and makes it synonymous with hegemonic capitalist globalization, to which he would propose that of heterogeneity, which must be put together with Trotsky’s combined uneven development in his *History of the Russian Revolution*. Remember the national-allegory novel of the Third World as the aesthetic form that complements the First-World postmodernism of pastiche and kitsch and mixed forms (Jameson)? We are now instead dealing with overlaps of chronologies, archaic and new forms, ancient, old and future content, jerrymandered, muddled geographies, confusing social groups with new and old labels assuming old and new identities coming out of intersections, mixtures, blurred lines,

mestizajes. There is a coeval coexistence of power and knowledge, modes of production, if you will. This is the picture that Quijano wants to paint for us in the big canvas of history or, rather, histories. Postcolonialism splintered from postmodernism, Third and First World became Global North and Global South, the Second went awry or found new home in a new China, “Anglo” and “Latin,” if you wish intermingled in the Americas. Official histories of philosophy or sociology still occur but there are deviations, there are still agents who wish to stay brutal and normative. Quijano approaches the legacy of subaltern subjects, i.e. “the indigenous” and other minorities. Stakes were high and remain high. “Literature” and “culture” became signs of an upheaval that exceeded their respective academic institutions in the U.S. and elsewhere. The relative marginality of both signs in quotes allowed for greater freedoms, at least in the 1990s. It is perhaps less obvious now.

This posthumous anthology comes out six years after Quijano’s death. We retrieve the tensions and the efforts of these previous decades through these thoughts and writings. Quijano is by now a widely recognized figure among Latin Americanists, less so in other fields, I would say, and even less so, generally speaking, on the European side of the Atlantic. I have Spain and Britain in mind, contexts I am most familiar with, where the very term “colonial” is still to this day repressed and secondary, an add-on, even among historians of Iberian empires and self-styled Early Modernists, never mind mass media and conventional politics. These pugnacious essays magnify the “colonial” and thus bite the bullet, informing our messy times.

A good jumping point, at least for me, is Quijano’s association with another stellar sociologist, Immanuel Wallerstein (1930-2019), in the context of the Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems and Civilizations at the State University of New York at Binghamton. This peripheral institution delivered a disruptive and salutary knowledge of the historicist and internationalist kind inspired by the great French historian of the Mediterranean. Nothing but the big picture: the bigger, the better. Quijano was a visiting faculty member there. The famous essay “Americanness as a concept, or the Americas in the modern world system” (ISSI, 134/1992), co-written with Wallerstein, not included in this collection, is an excellent example of such a fruitful collaboration. “America” is the big name, an original misnomer, which signals a crucial dimension –still unfinished, still unfolding-- in the process or history of capitalism qua system of construction, destruction, and exploitation. Power or domination is always already in the vicinity in the relation to knowledge too. These are major themes that cannot be captured in a single headline. A big constellation opens up in the skies as soon as we put the pair, imperial and colonial, together. There are others: labor and capital, Europe and Eurocentrism, the clash and convergence of plural collectivities, the conquest and colonization of the “New World,” the

emergence of new subjectivities, Indians, Blacks, whites, the “Indigenous” component, the fight for a knowledge that was not considered to be such. It is not a pretty picture in Quijano’s account. These essays deal with the manifold faces of this “ugly history.”

Your imagination will face the challenge of a colossal world-system of capitalist dynamics with its mutating centers and peripheries from the 1500s to the present. This book is not a history of Western victories. Quijano is no happy Hegelian traveler of imperial histories from one hegemon to another, holding the chicha and the plate of roasted *chancho* up to a toast for the victors, and that’s that. He bothers with the heterogeneous histories of those defeated by such imperial historical constructs: this is one possible staging for these essays. Why do so? The interplay, emotional and intellectual, with subordinated majorities in the historical peripheries of such world-system (think of the heritage of Indigenous communities in contemporary Mexico and the Andes) will thus be added for a richer picture: there are “lights” and “shadows,” if you wish, “victories” and “defeats” (Quijano mentions some, to which I will return in the end (351-53). Dealing with the question of the difference between Wallerstein and Quijano will deliver some options for critiques of core hegemonic power and the desirable addition of the peripheries or marginalities, assuming a peripheral Latin American perspective, Marxist to boot, going along with such global dynamics. Why one or the other and not both? I prefer to keep both authors closer together rather than putting them apart (hyperlinking over delinking is my wink to the informed reader of these pages, and the “global” addition, now ubiquitous, must include tentacular organizations and multi-referential institutions to be sure). So yes, there are centers and peripheries, or unequal power relations, also in relation to knowledge production, and perhaps the various riders or agents ride together, although perhaps not together in the same vehicle and not in the same direction towards one happy global market, its comprehension exceeding the best efforts of most individualities, mine certainly. Collectivities enter the big picture in Quijano’s foundational essays. His “big history” is not one populated by big recognizable names.

The formula “coloniality of power” alerts us to some red-danger signs along the “global” journey. It puts the collective focus on the darker undertones of economic exploitation and political domination; follow the “Latin” thread in the Americas and you will get lost in the Minotaur’s labyrinth, where is Ariadne? There is alienation or a negative ontology if you wish: “It is time finally to cease being what we are not” (293, 297) and continue the pushing and the pulling among the various collectivities under the different names historically constructed in the *longue durée* in Latin America, which is double French for the big picture not to miss. The “indigenous” (sic, with quotation marks) is one inevitably significant option in that they ideally, potentially carry a memory of destruction, subordination, resilience and subversion (chapter 10). The theoretical

(im-)possibility of a systemic disruptive knowledge follows suit. These foundational Americanist essays --Americanist in the expansionist sense of the word, thus relativizing the conventional absolutism of the U.S.-- configure a counter-narrative of global history that signals the Other of Eurocentrism since the 1500s to the present. This is indeed the distorting mirror whose image has been bought, also by Latin America, and which gives the collective “we” of Quijano’s ideal community of readers and interpreters the wrong continental “identity.” When we read these essays today, 2026, we are forced to rethink the 1990s. Who does not feel a relative closing of the horizon of emancipation since the 1960s according to the accounts of the previous generations? Those willing to throw in the towel will not reread these pages.

I do not see any particular order, either chronologically or thematically, in the twenty essays that comprise the volume. They responded to multiple situations and were published in various formats across diverse national settings to date. It is indeed a mixed bag of solid and minor, longer and shorter articles, conference papers, public talks, “occasion pieces” addressed to workers in Puerto Rico or the Porto Alegre protests, for example. The last chapter is a brief interview with Nora Valerde in 1991. How I wish a more extensive interview had occurred at a later date. The strongest essays, I find, are: “Paradoxes of Modernity in Latin America” (1); “Coloniality of Power and Social Classification” (5), written in the *festschrift* for Immanuel Wallerstein, and edited by Giovanni Arrighi; “Coloniality of Power, Globalization and Democracy” (7); “Don Quixote and the Windmills in Latin America,” originally titled “Phantoms of Latin America” (9); “The ‘Indigenous Movement’ and Unresolved Questions in Latin America” (10); and “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America”, first published in the Duke journal *Nepantla*, now extinct (11). I find the subsequent essays repetitive, which does not mean that occasional angles and meaningful insights will not emerge. The gathering of these disparate materials takes merit. Originally published in between the 1990s-2000s (one of them was written in 1978, apropos an anthology of Mariátegui’s texts). There is polyphony: there are several acknowledged translators (Michael Ennis, Larry Carney, Victor Wallis). Some translations are not attributed. I do not know how well Quijano wrote or spoke in English. One occasional comment confirms some knowledge of Quechua (note 1 on p. 389 around “bien vivir” and “buen vivir”). Suggestions of conceptual differences among the various Indigenous communities in Peru are made here and there but not developed with the intensity of a well-situated ethnographer. The reading is, however, engrossing, enriching, challenging, and circumspect. There is an unaccustomed seriousness of purpose and scholarly dedication here that cannot be contained by the various disciplines or adjusted to the various ups and downs of the nations in the Americas and beyond.

The themes that come out: the big frame of the world-systems theory, including a severe assessment of the decline of the former empire (Spain); the uneven pair of race and labor (gender is sympathetically mentioned, yet it is not developed), each concept is by itself a knot of world complexities; the Indigenous category as a historical social majority; the heterogeneity of historico-social formations that inevitably generates a confusing array of social groups and timespaces; coloniality and its theoretical dismantling (or decoloniality); the experience of defeat emerging in the 1980s from the revolts of the 1960s. Yet what is happening now? The internal implosion of the hegemonic Anglo West, the disruption of university structures, including the degradation of academic labor, including the attack from political and economic powers, a certain banalization of cultural studies and decolonial studies, the inclusion of new chapters of the official closing of the Euro-American mind that wants little or no traffic with the non-West world at large (one of Kishore Mahbubani's theme); the pervasive precarity and systemic uncertainty of institutional life, which Trump has exacerbated; war in Russia/Ukraine, Gaza and Iran; the fog (of war) of inherited ideals of democracy, liberation or emancipation, the twilight of the universalist category of the West, often coopted by geopolitics, identity proliferation passing through markers and accelerated and compressed timespaces, digitality, AI virtualizations, etc.

We are not better off than the generations before us and the ghost of Aníbal Quijano would be surprised to be boxed in by Latin American Studies; yet it is one platform among others. How are these studies now? Who is willing to say out loud? How is Latin America now? Bukele, Milei, Katz, the original Peru in the context of the Andes? But there are also Sheinbaum and Lula, and all those meeting with Sánchez in Barcelona in April 2026, perhaps. What about the U.S.? Is the "Old World" an inspirational force at the present moment? The challenge is perhaps greater than ever: yet another turn to the Gramscian formula, "pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will," greater generosity of spirit of the West, whilst the U.S.-led West is in alleged decline. Let us remember that Latin America is not part of this official West but of the Global South. What if the "colonial" dimension links up to such a Global South counterpoint to a U.S.-led West? Quijano did not see this future but he can help us find some footing for the journeys ahead.

Here, Eurocentrism adopted by Latin America requires no simple replacement (354). Latin America constitutes, in Quijano's account, a privileged timespace, a laboratory, if you will, of heterogeneous contestation of meanings and practices, largely of subordinations, dependence, defeats, and the insufficient and "bad" name ("Latin"?) will not go away at least for him tomorrow. Cartesian dichotomies of body and soul are deemed undesirable and other dichotomies are less obvious now. There are numerous overlaps and crossings with the "Anglo" cousin inside and outside the U.S. borders, precisely at this moment of alleged decline of U.S. hegemony (the Latino

dimension is missing in Quijano as far as I can see, also Asia does not yet emerge as a significant actor). Temporalities are compressed, accelerated, and subjected to frenetic rhythms (“flood the zone” according to political strategists); geographies undergo gerrymandered rearrangements according to geopolitical designs knocking down national sovereignty (Venezuela is one egregious example); migrations and flows of people keep occurring. There are diverse habits of cultural consumption among the different generations, increasingly digitized and virtualized, all these phenomena give us pause to speak of “one” anything, one U.S., one Europe, one Latin America, one class, one social group, also in relation to the uneven but steady coexistence between the two main languages in the “West,” but the category is fraught with tension. The Old World is barely holding on to its EU-NATO configurations. We appear to be present at the moment of dissolution. “We are living in a very different world from the one we had just thirty or thirty-five years ago, [...] there is a major historical change and this is a new historical period in actual fact, not in a rhetorical sense” (351). Quijano wrote this in 2010. Quijano brings first-hand experience from Peru exacerbated in the 1960s and 1980s. It is here that the Indigenous question “bites,” also in the inexistence of an Indigenous movement in Peru, in contradistinction to Ecuador and Bolivia, currently defeated (240-251). He also brings the experience of exile in Mexico, immigration in the U.S. in noted moments, the close-reading of the Marxist historian and sociologist José Carlos Mariátegui (1894-1930), and the increasing necessity of a big-picture imperial/colonial dyad embedded in the history of capital: “Outside the power matrix perspective of coloniality, the indigenous issues make no sense” (232). Outside such a matrix, Latin America makes no sense either. But neither Western Europe nor the West does. The “colonial” dimension is thus not to be conceived as backwardness, belatedness, optional *res extensa*, barbarian addition to the enterprising civilizational and capitalist European spirit acting brave and solo with images of the great film making of a Werner-Herzog in Aguirre, *Wrath of God* or *Fitzcarraldo*, say. Hence, the matrix of coloniality is the coeval partner in crime of a disparate and unequal modernity that constructed its hegemon around the notion of Europe from the fifteenth to the twentieth century to lose it later to the U.S. and now apparently to Asia because of the Chinese impetus (Adam Tooze has spoken of three stages of history, pre-history as anything preceding the Nineteenth century, modern history is the Nineteenth and the Twentieth century and the future remains Chinese!). Now that such teleology of progress has run into complications, if not exploded, how not to revisit the previous centuries? Quijano is like a restless pilgrim who accounts for defeats and finds no good shelter, no fixed tokenized identity, no safe home anywhere for too long. He teaches us to shake reified and not to take fetishized identity names for granted. He encourages us to seek dynamism in the thinking process that will rest, alas, in no safe nest or national ground. No safe social class

or label will do either, not even the “indigenous,” which he puts in quotation marks. “Coloniality”—coming out of the long experience of colonialism—is inseparable from global capitalism. Its “modernity” is not to be naturalized. Such is the fundamental matrix of intelligibility that may not explain every single feature of the big canvas, but helps clarify an awful lot of the said big canvas. Is there a way out? Asking the question is already plenty. Quijano signifies, among many other things, a refusal to fit into the Area-Studies format, Anglophone or not, typically exercised in the social sciences, but not exclusively. Go deep in time and space, also free-range, is one possible slogan. That refusal alone is worth your reading in the many evenings. The “location” of Quijano is the (un-)making of “America,” expansively understood, come what may. “We” are not through with that yet. This book is a must-read.