

Local Histories and Global Designs: An Interview with Walter Mignolo

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This interview with Walter Mignolo expands on the issues of modernities, border thinking, geopolitics of knowledge, subalternity and post-Occidentalism presented in *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton UP 2000). Since the mid eighties, Mignolo has worked on what he calls “the colonial question.” This interest led to the publication of *The Darker Side of the Renaissance* (1995), (unanimously praised in literary, social and historical journals) one of the most influential and widely discussed assessments of the European colonial expansion in the Americas. *Local Histories* takes up and expands on the notions of colonial and imperial difference and the coloniality of power, crucial questions raised in *Darker Side*. *Local Histories* also connects critical discourses of Eurocentrism and globalization from different parts of the world to different critical traditions (Latin American, U.S. Latina/o, North African, Indian and South European) in order to makes us think “with, against and beyond the legacy of Western epistemology.” However, for all its academic erudition, *Local Histories* can be understood as a political and ethical manifesto that forces us to think about the ethics and politics of teaching and research, the institutional production of knowledge, and our own investment (as academics) in perpetuating both colonial differences and social injustices.

Delgado and Romero: What do you consider the dialectical relationship between local histories and global designs? Is it not true that in a sense the questions posed by local histories have acquired new relevance given the globalization of culture?

Mignolo: Let me first address the question of the “dialectical relationship between local histories and global designs.” I said some place in the book that local histories are everywhere but that only some local histories are in a position of imagining and implementing global designs. What I call the “modern/colonial world” is in itself a world that came out of certain kinds of local histories: imperial local histories. Imperial Spain became an instrumental agent and made possible the implementation of Christian designs for conversion to a global one. It was imperial England in complicity with French enlightenment that displaced (but not replaced) Christian global designs into Secular civilizing ones. It was imperial U.S. that displaced (but not replaced) the global design of the civilizing mission by a global design of development and modernization. And it is the market that is becoming the global design of a new form of colonialism, a global coloniality, that is being analyzed as “the network society” (Castells), “globalcentrism” (Coronil), and “Empire” (Hardt and Negri). Thus, the globalization of “culture” was always there, since “culture” (in whatever technology of the time was available) is the material aspect in which the history of capitalism and of global designs (Christianity, Civilizing Mission, Development and Modernization, Marketization) evolved. Technology today allows “culture,” and financial markets, to move faster. However, I would not say that there is a globalization of culture. I would rather say that planetary communication and the coloniality of power move faster and, like in the sixteenth century, in one direction. The force with which Inca’s and Aymara’s “cultures” entered and modified Castilian’s was less significant than the reverse. That is, Castilian knowledge and attitude toward life did not change as much as knowledge and attitude toward life among Aymara and Inca people. The same today: Bolivia’s music players and restaurants in the U.S. or Europe are less relevant (aren’t they?), than European television and popular music in Bolivia. In La Paz, for example, there is a “German Channel” that provides the state of the weather in Germany and in Europe for the Bolivian audience. I am not aware of a “Bolivian Channel” in Germany that does the same.

Delgado and Romero: The border, especially the border between the United States and Mexico, as a source of localized knowledge in the work of Gloria Anzaldúa and Alfred Arteaga, informs your thinking. And yet, the usage of your term “border thinking” which ties the border more to epistemology (“do we need a kind of

thinking that moves along the diversity of the historical process itself?") than to a region, can be seen as diluting political problems and practices that the theory itself was attempting to address. Is the threat of such dilution real?

Mignolo: Thanks for asking this question that will allow me to clarify, for you and for myself, what I feel is not yet clear in the book. And let me start by your question in parenthesis ("do we need . . ."). Let me say, first, that political process (and social events) will, out of necessity, be interpreted in the frame of existing macro-narratives, which are indeed theories. There are a number of macro-narratives available guiding our interpretation of events and processes. One is Christian cosmology with its beginning in the creation of the world and the first woman and the first man. Another is the secular view of Western Civilization with its origin in Greece. Still another is the secular and scientific macro-narrative of the natural history of the world and of the human species. And still others are the opposing, and complementary views, of liberal and Marxist cosmologies after the eighteenth century. There are, of course, particular disciplines, methods and theories in each discipline, even interdisciplinary attempts to understand processes and events. However, my hypothesis is that disciplines are somewhat dependent on one or more of the existing Western macro-narratives. I deal with this issue particularly in chapter 6, but the problem is brought out and mentioned almost everywhere in the book.

Now, where is this leading us? To your question, I believe, of whether we need a kind of thinking that moves along the diversity of historical processes. Let me put it in another way: if the subaltern cannot speak, as Gayatri Spivak taught us to think, it is not because they cannot really speak or write. In her argument, the immolation of the widow as an event was "translated" into the macro-narrative of the Civilizing Mission as there was no available macro-narrative from where the needs of the subaltern could have been interpreted. Thus, my point is that events and political processes that attempt to counter the control of the State or of global forces are in need of macro-narratives from the perspective of coloniality. These macro-narratives would enable the interpretation of processes and events in a macro-narrative (theory or cosmology) underlining both the act of protest, the creative energy of subaltern events and processes to create a more just and equal society.

Let me simplify my previous point. (Neo)Liberal and (neo) Marxist macro-narratives are today in different ways dominant models: both understand and justify capitalist expansion, and understand and criticize capitalist expansion. However, both models were put in place at the height of nation-state building in Europe, and

some of these nation-states (England, France, and Germany) were at the same time involved in the second-wave of colonial expansion. And with the expansion of capitalism went the expansion of concepts, methods and theories. Kant and Hobbes, Hegel and Marx, Freud and Heidegger became the models to think from those local histories in which the global designs of Western local histories were exported and, successfully or not, being implemented. You can see in that encounter of global designs imagined and exported from certain local histories (European) to other local histories (in America, Asia or Africa) the importance of both the concept of border and of border thinking from the perspective of subalternity. For instance, what do you do with Kant in Africa since he is at the same time a brilliant thinker of the enlightenment totally blind to coloniality? What do you do with Marx if you come from the perspective of the history and experiences of Indigenous populations in the Americas or Afro-Caribbean French or British (ex) colonies? Certainly, you can use it to understand and criticize the “logical structure” of capitalistic economy, but you cannot necessarily derive an ethics and an ethos from a Marxian experience with the proletariat of the European industrial revolution. You need to understand and imagine possible futures beyond the proletariat experiences of capitalism since victims of capitalistic exploitations were also the Indigenous and African slave, although it was and is not the same as the experience of the European workers in the European factories. I point out, in the book, how Kathibi, Fanon and the Zapatistas pointed out these sorts of limits in Marxist thinking. And, of course, I have nothing to add here to the criticism of the (neo)Liberal perspective, not only in its celebratory aspects but also in the auto-critical reflections on capitalists’ excess, particularly under this stage we call globalization (Giddens, Soros, de Soto, for instance).

Thus, the United States and Mexican border offered me an epistemic metaphor to make an effort toward thinking beyond the hegemonic Western conceptualization (of everything), for the right and for the left, which went together with Western capitalistic and colonial expansion. Why? Because you have, on the one hand, a hegemonic “right” discourse (modified and adapted to local histories, whether those histories are U.S., Indonesia or Bolivia) dictating the discourse of the market, of the law and or society. And you have, on the other hand, also a hegemonic “left” discourse (modified and adapted to local histories, whether those local histories are of the U.S., Indonesia or Bolivia). Shall the world continue to think and speak from the hegemonic models of thinking, from the right and from the left that emerged in Europe under capitalism?

On the other hand, since we cannot go back to other “original” thinking traditions (China, Islam, India, Amerindians and Latin Americans) because of the growing hegemony of the Western and modern/colonial world, what remains available to us is either reproducing Western abstract universals and projecting them all over the world, or exploring the possibilities of border thinking to imagine possible futures. That is to say, of engaging the colonialism of Western epistemology (from the left and from the right) from the perspective of epistemic forces that had been turned into subaltern (traditional, folkloric, religious, emotional, etc.) forms of knowledge. The metaphor of the “border” as articulated by Anzaldúa, for example, provided me with a powerful metaphor that I attempted to use as a connector to establish links with similar metaphors emerging from a diversity of colonial experiences. For instance, double critique and *une pensée autre*, double consciousness, the Zapatistas’s double translation, *creolité*, transculturation, provincializing Europe, negative critique introduced by African philosophers, etc., are an already existing conceptual arsenal making it possible to “think otherwise,” from the interior exteriority of the border. That is, to engage in border thinking is to move beyond the categories created and imposed by Western epistemology.

Am I diluting the political problems and practices that the theory itself was attempting to address? I do not think so. We cannot, in my opinion, think of the “border” as an object of study from a “territorial” epistemology, not infected by the border. A dilution would be to think that a different political effectiveness could be achieved by changing the content and not the terms of the conversation. Changing the content only would, of course, allow for certain victories, say, in Proposition 127 or other similar social conflicts. This is the level of reform, which of course shall remain open. But my argument moves, simultaneously, toward a complementary end: that of transformation, of changing the terms, and not only the content, of the conversation. The political and the ethical are at this point in need of a new epistemology, epistemologies that come from the borders and from the perspectives of subaltern coloniality. And one final note: the border epistemologies I am claiming are not intended to “replace” the existing ones. It won’t happen like that even if we want it to. Existing macro-narratives are well entrenched. What I am claiming is the space for an epistemology that comes from the border and aims toward political and ethical transformations.

Delgado and Romero: You state that “theoretical models dealing with languages have been built in complicity with colonial expansion.” One of the very issues, which you do not discuss in your text, is the “expansion of such models in the English-Only Movement”

or “English for Our Children” initiatives that have gained currency in the U.S. Southwest. What have we learned from history as to the success or failure of such initiatives?

Mignolo: You are right, I do not discuss specifically these issues but I believe that I provide all the necessary elements to draw some preliminary conclusions. First of all, let’s remember both that English is at the same time the “Empire companion” (to bring Nebrija’s fifteenth-century felicitous expression to our day) a national language of England and the U.S. As such, English is not the “mother” tongue of the number of English speakers I discuss in chapter seven. Let me clarify to avoid critics with a deconstructive bent, that by “mother tongue” I am just saying here that English is not the language in which all current English speakers were born and raised during the first four-five years of their life. For many, many people, English is not “their language” they just “use it,” as comedian Victor Borge liked to say. On the other hand “English Only” has several corners and doors to enter. The most obvious, of course, is the reproduction of the nineteenth-century nationalist ideology: one territory, one language, one culture and the consequences it has for the post-enlightenment concept of “foreigner” and “citizens.” Secondly, “English Only” has indeed two identified “enemies.” “English Only” doesn’t mean “not French, not German, not Italian.” It says “Not Spanish and not Black-English.” Which means that English-only is the current actualization of the links between language, empire and race that are at the foundation of the modern/colonial world matrix. The interesting variation here is that an ex-imperial language (Spanish) has become demoted for the third time in history when it became a strong “minority language” in the United States, as we are witnessing it today. Let me say that the first time Spanish was demoted was in the eighteenth century, when Catholic and Latin Spain lost the train of modernity to the Protestant and Anglo countries of Europe. The second was when Spanish became the language of a substantial part of the Third World (Spanish America), and the third, after 1848 and 1898, and particularly after 1970. I am less familiar with the history and intricacies of Anglo-English and Black-English but I would like to point out that this is also a very interesting phenomenon to analyze in comparison with Creole-English in the Caribbean. The imperial role of the United States created a different split between American English and its variants, in comparison with the ways that linguistic and racial differences have been articulated in the ex-British Caribbean.

What we have learned from history is then, that language is the companion of the empire and a unifying factor of the nation.

Furthermore, language is engrained in epistemology and the defense of the purity and hegemony of a language goes hand in hand with the defense of the purity and hegemony of an epistemology. From here we could derive an interesting discussion about English as the language of knowledge, as Sanskrit and Latin were in the past in different parts and times of the world. Border thinking, on the other hand, allows you to imagine possible futures in which the richness of thought and creativity in language comes from the borders. More specifically, from the subaltern side of the border, from *Black-English* into English; from *Latino-Spanish* into Spanish (e.g., infecting hegemonic epistemology from Black-English or Spanish, as Toni Morrison and Gloria Anzaldúa do). From this kind of epistemology you can then derive political strategies and ethical imperatives. Otherwise, you will depend on the political frame and ethical imperatives imposed by the “good side” of existing hegemonic narratives, operating on the concept of “territory” rather than of “borderland” or “double consciousness” or “une pensée-autre,” or operating on the conceptualization embedded in colonial languages, of which English is the last and more powerful version, nationally and internationally. This, at least, we can learn from history.

Delgado and Romero: You question the “natural links between languages and territories” and at one point even state that area studies scholarship contributed to this myth. How can the teaching of literature (“Latin American,” “American” “U.S. Latina/Latino”) take place nowadays in the U.S, if we are to acknowledge the artificial construction of these connections?

Mignolo: I wonder whether we should keep on thinking in terms of “the teaching of literature.” “Literature” as it is understood today almost everywhere in the world and everywhere in society (from the university to the mass media) has been ideologically shaped by the combination of national/global designs. This is precisely one of the strong arguments made by Edouard Glissant that I try to take advantage of in *Local Histories/Global Designs*. Thus, rather than “the teaching of literature” I would tend to think—and actually I practice it in my teaching—in terms of “teaching issues and problems” related to the history of the modern/colonial world and the present articulation of global coloniality. Of course you can deal with such issues and problems in different ways. To simplify matters let’s say that you could deal with such issues in the Social Sciences or in the Humanities. Therefore, my concern is rather the role those of us in the Humanities would like the Humanities to have in the University of the twenty-first century. I wrote a short article that appeared in PMLA about this issue.

To answer your question in this frame, I taught last year and will teach several more times in the future an undergraduate course titled “Why Hispanics are not White: Globalization and Latinidad” I use some literature there, literature like Anzaldúa helps me and the students think about the issue, but I use also World-Wide-Web material, essays like Albert Memmi’s racism or sociological articles such as those by Wallerstein and Balibar on race and labor and race and immigration. My goal in this seminar is to help students understand the historical formation of the ethno-racial pentagon in the U.S., *from* the perspective of Hispanics/Latinos. I also try to make them understand how Latinidad came about in the nineteenth century, in Europe, and was translated into Latin America as part of the French imperial design. In another course I teach on “Languages, Literatures and Post-nationalism” I use among others: Rigoberta Menchú, Rosario Ferré (*The House in the Lagoon*), Cherríe Moraga, Ariel Dorfman (*Going South/Looking North*), an article by Partha Chatterjee “Modernity in two languages” (Bengali and English), etc. My goal is not so much to “teach literature” but, rather, to use literature to explore issues of the politics of languages and writing in a post-national world. Or better yet, if I teach something I would say that I try to “teach students to think critically about modernity/coloniality and global coloniality” and in doing so I sometimes use literary texts. But literary texts are never the point of arrival. The point of arrival is the issues or the problems I explore critically as a scholar and teacher in the Humanities. This is not the place to discuss the shortcomings of the “Humanities.” Let me just say that it is crucial, at this point, to rethink the articulations in the production and distribution of knowledge, and the role of the Humanities, the Social Sciences and the Natural Sciences in the corporate university under which we are living and working. Your question implies an understanding of the structure and transformation of the modern/colonial world, it implies going beyond national literatures and looking at the larger picture in the structure of colonial power, language and the interstate system. And that is what I like to do now. It would be petty to spend time and energy discussing literary vs. cultural studies within the American acadème! We should leave that to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and concentrate on the decolonization of knowledge and scholarship, within the acadème of course!

Delgado and Romero: You advance the idea that we should think of exile as a location. We understand your sentence to mean that exile can be construed as a state of mind, instead of an acknowledgement of geographical displacement. Is this the case? Are you equating exile to your definition of border thinking?

Mignolo: There is a sense of “territoriality” embedded in the idea of “location” in such a way that movement is not seen as location but precisely as the contrary, as “dis-location.” And location is taken to mean “in land.” Where is that idea coming from? Perhaps from the national imaginary that began to take shape in the eighteenth century, in Europe. Immanuel Kant translated the political imaginary into the metaphysical discourse of “space” and “time.” Paul Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic* was indeed, and perhaps indirectly, the beginning of the end of that imaginary. The “Black-Atlantic” is indeed a location “in-water” if you wish, a transient place, the location of those who have been dis-located from the territory. Of course, I am not saying that exile is related to water and seas. I am saying that Gilroy’s contribution to imagine “location” beyond the imaginary of the nation, of the territory with frontiers, was the first step to thinking that one is located and by what (whom) doesn’t matter. Or, if you wish, it is impossible not to be located and that there is no reason to believe that “location” means in-land, means fixation, means territoriality. This is the metaphysical imaginary built upon the political determination of the nation-states and imperial designs.

Now, if exiles (as well as diasporic people, immigrants, and refugees) are all a form of “location-in-movement” rather than “location-in-land” (and both in-movement and in-land are understood as “places”), we could perhaps argue that border thinking is a necessary consequence of these sorts of locations. Exiles “have” to leave the territory where they belonged and, consequently, are located in a particular kind of subaltern position, and that subaltern position creates the conditions for double consciousness and border thinking. To be in exile is to be simultaneously in two locations and in a subaltern position. And those are the basic conditions for border thinking to emerge at different levels: epistemic, political and ethic. Let me give you another example: Heidegger’s concept of “being” is grounded in (or it presupposes) a territorial notion of location, while Levinas’ concept of “otherwise than being” is grounded in (or it presupposes) a border notion of location. Levinas presupposes a double consciousness of a sort; the diasporic location that is ingrained in people who not only “think,” but rather also “feel” the non-territorial location of the Jewish diaspora. Gilroy translated this feeling to the Black-Atlantic of the African diaspora. And by doing so he made more visible the similarities, and at the same time the historical differences, between the Jewish and African diasporas.

And one last point: All these different kinds of locations in movements that I am referring to are all forms that have been historically articulated by the colonial nature of power (i.e., coloniality

of power) in the making of the modern/colonial world system. And in that sense, in that precise sense, they are all potential loci of epistemic, politic, ethic, and aesthetic border thinking.

Delgado and Romero: Can you articulate for our readers your concept of “linguaging”?

Mignolo: First of all the concept of “linguaging” was introduced, according to my knowledge, by Chilean neurophysiologists Umberto Maturana and Francisco Varela in his ground-breaking book *El Arbol del Conocimiento*. The concept appears in the last chapter, the chapter on inter-action between living organisms. Now, if you look for the term linguaging in that book you will not find it. You will find the “idea” but not the term. The term appears as such in the English translation, *The Tree of Knowledge*. Now, to understand the concept of *linguaging* it is necessary, first, to understand *language* beyond “human” languages in the way it has been conceptualized in Western scholarship through the philosophy of language, since Plato, and by the tradition that Noam Chomsky identified as “cartesian linguistics.” *Language* in Maturana’s and Varela’s argument is any type of inter-action between living organisms, and not only *human* living organisms. Put this upside down and what you have is that “human languages” are just a small part and a particular type of interaction among living organisms, different, for instance, from the language of the “flora” and the “fauna.” Now, there is something particular to living organisms we call “human” and that particularity is that “human living organisms” can be observers of domains of interactions among living organisms, are able to describe those behaviors, and furthermore, to observe themselves observing other organisms. Thus, Maturana and Varela encapsulate this complex idea as follows:

We (meaning living organisms that are observers) operate in language when an observer sees that the objects of our linguistic distinction are elements of our linguistic domain. Language is *an ongoing process that only exists as linguaging, not as isolated items of behavior.* (*The Tree of Knowledge* 210)

Now how can neurophysiology, colonialism and border thinking come together through the concept of linguaging? Well, one of your previous questions was related to “language” and “empire.” I would like to say now that when you write grammars and vocabularies of a complex set of linguaging processes among a given population, you convert the process into an object and you own, you possess, that process that you call *language*. *Language* becomes then an object, with a grammar and vocabulary that you have and

regulate. It also becomes the point of reference to measure and rank *linguaging practices* that do not comply with the regulatory force of *language*. I devoted chapters 1 and 2 of the *Darker Side of the Renaissance* to this process, to the colonization of languages during the sixteenth century. That is to say, to the double operation that consisted of a) writing the grammar and vocabulary of Castilian based on the grammar and vocabulary of Latin, as Nebrija did, and b) using the grammar of Latin to write the grammar and vocabulary of Indigenous languages, as many missionaries did. When linguaging becomes language, and language is conceived as an object that can be controlled by a grammar and a vocabulary as well as an instrument to control the population, what you have is the conversion of an interactive process inscribed in your body into something that is “outside” yourself and of which you become dependent.

Now, think about the complicity between grammar (rather than language) and the State. Think about English Only and you will understand not only the definition but also the necessity of a concept of linguaging to return the legitimacy of linguaging practices that do not follow necessarily the rules of the State. Practices that are, however, as *human* and legitimate as those practices that the State would like to control by the *grammar of the national language*. Furthermore, it would be necessary to think more about the long-lasting complicity between a basically de-notative philosophy of language, in the West since Plato, and the grammar of the language and the law of the State. Border thinking in connection with linguaging is one particular aspect of my argument in which I am trying to break away from the control of grammar, language and epistemology (chapter six of *Local Histories*). Last, but not least, the links between grammar, language epistemology and the “law” of the State are instrumental links for the control of minor and migrant languages. Thus, another reason to focus on linguaging as a process rather than *language* as an object and an instrument of communication.

Delgado and Romero: You write that 1848 (U.S.-Mexican War), 1898 (the Spanish-American War) and 1959 (the Cuban Revolution) created the conditions for the emerging of Latino culture in the U.S. What role do you think government policies, like the Bracero Program and Operation Bootstrap did for the emergence of those cultures?

Mignolo: Your question invokes two different levels of the notion of “emerging cultures.” Let me address first the question of dates. They are the markers of significant transformations in the global order. It is true that 1848 is a national conflict and as such doesn’t have the same impact that the American Revolution of 1776 or

the Spanish-American War of 1898. The Spanish-American War is a landmark, as important as the French Revolution of 1789. The fact that these two events are not at the same “level,” in the academic as well as the civil society imaginary, is due to the hegemony of Eurocentric history and not to the socio-historical transformation of the world order. It is at this moment that the racial distinction between Anglo and Latino cultures, at the level of the Atlantic World, is recast in the Americas with force. The white-supremacy justification of the Spanish-American War gives a definitive imprimatur to the fact that being White Catholics and Latinos is not White enough. On the other hand, the Cuban Revolution introduces another dimension, a dimension that was not yet available to those who built the ideology of the Spanish-American War. The Cuban revolution contributed to a different dimension of the Latino culture in the United States and has to do more with political ideology than with racial ideology. Cuba established the signature for the political turmoil of Central America, for the Chile of Allende and for all the political refugees from South America. And thus contributed not only to the culture of *Latinidad* in the U.S., but allowed the Nixon administration to introduce the label *Hispanic* as the fifth leg of what David Hollinger called the ethno-racial pentagon.

So, my concern was to draw the map of the global condition of *Latinidad* in Europe as well as in the Americas, since the distinction Anglo/Protestant and Catholic/Latino was established in Europe around the eighteenth century. It is just necessary to read what Immanuel Kant thought of the Italian and the Spanish to understand that South/Latinidad/Catholicity were a paradigm of inferior rank in comparison to North/Anglicidad/Protestantism. Thus, there is no question that the Bracero Program and Operation Bootstrap as well as the nomination of Linda Chávez as Secretary of Labor or Paul H. O’Neill’s (and chief executive of Alcoa) in Acuña, South of the border, all contribute in different ways to Latino/Hispanic culture. But to be more specific about the Bracero Program, it fits quite well the larger picture of racism, in the modern/colonial world, as justification for the exploitation of labor. Furthermore, if you keep in mind that the Bracero Program started after WWII and ended around 1964, when the burden of immigration was getting out of hand, racism as the justification of labor met the limits of nationalism and the control of immigration. So, there is a close connection between the end of the Bracero Program and the beginning of the label *Hispanic*, introduced under Richard Nixon’s administration. That is, in the ways Latino/Hispanics perceive themselves and how they are perceived in the colonial structure of power and the racial categorization inherent to the colonality of power. That is to say, the

Hispanic/Latino cultures are not only constituted by what Hispanics/Latinos/as do or do not do, but also by the frame under which they are interpreted by the State or acted upon by the transnational corporations (like Alcoa). “Culture” and “identity” are always, on the one hand, a double process of hegemonic allocation and subaltern relocation of meaning and, on the other hand, a complex play of forces between the market, the state, the civil society and the political (subaltern) society.

Delgado and Romero: What are the implications of linking language not to territory but to the body?

Mignolo: This question brings us back to languaging. If grammar is the Empire’s companion, as Nebrija clearly perceived, it was later on also the Nation-State’s companion. And in the case of those Nation-States that were also Empires, grammar worked in two directions; to unify the nation, and for the symbolic control of the colonial possessions, like Spanish in America or English in India. Thus, from the perspective of the State (Empire or Nation), language is linked to territory, since language is, in this conception, either almost an object we have or an instrument that the State can use. If you return language to the body, that is to say, in the sense that we do not “have” a language but “we are” language, then you contribute to reconstitute something that the State took away from the people and used as a form of social control. Imagine how terrible it is that you are dispossessed of something that is part of yourself, you lose an organ let’s say, and then that organ becomes an instrument that controls you. That is why languaging becomes important in my argument. Language is not an object or an instrument but an integral part of life itself (remember, I am casting languaging in the large spectrum of living organisms). When it comes to social control, and more specifically, to the type of social control enacted by coloniality (and the coloniality of power), it is very important to remember that although the State “appropriates” language, the State doesn’t have the right to “own” it. And doesn’t have the right either to transform it into an instrument of control. Languaging belongs to individuals in their interactive life and to life itself, which always survives the individual. Thus, we have here a different way of understanding why “linguistic rights” and “cultural rights” have become a space of contention between the plurality of national communities and the mono-logic of the State.

Delgado and Romero: An implicit argument of your work seems to be that Latin Americanism needs to expand in the direction of U.S. Latina/Latino culture. Should not also American Studies move in the same direction? In addition, how do you see both branches of knowledge interacting?

Mignolo: This is a good and interesting question. But let me first clarify a couple of things in your question. What you point out is not only implicit. It is explicit. I already published an article addressing such issues and another one is forthcoming. But, secondly, I do not make any recommendation as to what Latin Americanist (or as I will argue below, Americanists) should or should not do. I am very careful not to make this kind of recommendation. Deontic statements, from the left or from the right, have always already implicit in them an imperial seed. My work doesn't intend to give recommendation but to enter into a dialogue and to denounce any kind of recommendation and vigilant positions from an assumed superior position—be them (Neo)Christian, (Neo)Liberal, (Neo)Marxist or Postmodern—leading to an “epistemic racism.” This is precisely one the main argument and the thrust of *Local Histories/Global Designs*.

I have been thinking about and discussing the issue you address in graduate seminars and with colleagues. There are several factors that should be taken into account when thinking about the relationships between Latino/a Studies, on the one hand, and Latin American/American Studies on the other. In the U.S., Latin American Studies was part of area studies, during the Cold War. Although implicated in the Cold War, American Studies' very foundation was the study of the Nation. For that very reason, American Studies did not pay attention until recently to the fact that the United States was at the same time a nation and an empire. The volume edited by Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease, *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, is one of the first moving in this new direction. Thus, the relations that these three fields of inquiry entertain with each other are very different as to think of a parallel in the way you formulate it in your question.

What is indeed the strength of Latino/a Studies vis-à-vis Latin American Studies? First, Latin American Studies is an institutional creation of the U.S. academy and government, and not a creation of the academia and the governments in Latin America. There are no Latin American Studies as such IN Latin America. Latin America was the “object” of Latin American Studies in the U.S., the “object” across the colonial difference, while it became the “subject” of coloniality of power for Latin American intellectuals. If a parallel were needed here, I would say that what we have in Latin America would be closer to American than to Latin American Studies in the U.S. Thus, my argument in this regard is twofold: a) Latino/as Studies is similar to what I called Latin American Thought, a critical reflection on being and dependency, of coloniality and modernity, on the historical configuration of Latin America as a “subject”

rather than as an “object.” More than “studying” an object, Latin American (Critical) Thought is a sustained critical discourse that includes philosophy, the social sciences, essays, and also literature. In a similar vein, “latinidad” is not an “object” of study for Latino/as scholars. Latino/as Studies is rather a critical reflection on the historicity and constitution of a subject, the “Latino/a” subject.

Now it so happened that American Studies is equivalent to what I call Latin American Thoughts since American Studies scholars have a “subjective” relation with the field of inquiry. That is to say “America,” contrary to “Latin America,” since for Latin Americanists, it is not an object out there but rather a subject of our “own” historicity. And that “own” can be understood from different perspectives: Anglo as well as Latino/as or Black American scholars. And in that sense Latino/as Studies IS part of American Studies. The problem here is the relation of power within American Studies itself. Thus, the question is not only to open up American Studies to U.S. imperialism but to recognize that American Studies have been mainly dominated by the “white epistemology” of the very national history. I will not say then, that American Studies shall move in the same direction as Latin American Studies, but it is no longer evident that American Studies will be limited to the history of Anglo America and that it will remain within white epistemology. In that sense, I suspect that American Studies will have to open itself up to border thinking, to “double consciousness” and to what Native American scholars like Vine Deloria, Jr. would call “old ways in a New World.” Briefly, it seems to me that we are just beginning to think about the re-organization of fields of knowledge and their relation with ethics and politics.

Delgado and Romero: One of the recurring topics in your book is the issue of modernities (in plural) and the erasure of Spain and Portugal from the conceptualization of Modernity (in singular, and with capital M) as it was locked up during and since the Enlightenment. In this argument you follow the critical path of certain Latin American critics, such as Enrique Dussel, Anibal Quijano and Leopoldo Zea. While it is true that in Latin American critical thought on this topic has been greatly debated, in other disciplines this is still clearly not the case. In particular, critical works written from the discipline of English studies still refer to “modernity” in the singular; by the same token, most post-colonial criticism assumes the connection between empire and capitalist modernity. While we are sure your book will certainly help to dismantle those misconceptions, as we read it we could not help but think that it is only because you were writing in English, being published by a major North-American university press, and have a prestigious job at one

of the best universities in North America, that your argument will become “academic mainstream.” And in fact there is the danger that in spite of your willingness to acknowledge your intellectual debt with those Latin American critics, their work will never be as widely known as yours in this part of the world (unless they also become part of the elite academic group to which you undoubtedly belong). And we make this point not to dispute the importance of your contribution or the sincerity of your convictions, but to point out to what could be perceived as an inherent contradiction between your own enunciative position (literally and symbolically) and the subject matter of your book (the subalternization of knowledge and the colonial difference). How would you respond to such an objection.

Mignolo: First of all thanks for asking these sets of questions that are central for the ethics and politics of teaching and inquiry many of us (as you describe the situation) are involved in, either from Latin America or other parts of the world. And secondly, I do not see this as an objection but as a complex reality. “That is the way it is,” as Walter Cronkite used to say at the end of his daily news-show. But let’s take the various issues of your question one at a time.

First, in the introduction to *The Darker Side of the Renaissance* I explained why I decided to write in English. If I would have had written that book in Spanish it would have received much less attention—for different reasons—both in the Spanish as well as in the English speaking world. Scholars working in the colonial period or the sixteenth century in Latin America or in Spain, for example, are more historically than theoretically oriented. Those who work on the so-called pre-Columbian period stop at the conquest and are not interested in the fact that the colonial period is made up both of displaced Spanish and Amerindian societies and histories. There were several “declarations of intention” of translating it into Spanish, but it has not happened yet, and I do not think it will happen, at least in the near future. One of them was the Fondo de Cultura Económica in Mexico. But for some reason, reasons one can imagine given the nature of the book and the editorial politics, now, of the FCE, it did not go beyond the declaration of intention. On the other hand, the majority of English-speaking scholars of the postcolonial type (beyond of course Hispanists and Latin Americanists) do not read Spanish. So, it was obvious that the book had to be written in English in order to have any chance of making a statement and entering in the conversation of what you call the “academic mainstream.” And although you may be right in your assessment, I have the impression that the “academic mainstream” has different rooms with different kinds of furniture. But leave it at that.

Second, Princeton University Press has recently signed two contracts to have *Local Histories/Global Designs* translated into Spanish and Portuguese. Apparently—and to judge by the interest in translating *Local Histories* this book is being considered—in the Spanish and Portuguese speaking worlds—more mainstream than *The Darker Side*, since in general mainstream books are translated from English, French or German into Spanish and Portuguese. Now, this fact offers an interesting twist to your question. The novels of the Latin American literary boom were considered mainstream once they were translated into English, French and German mainly. Translation in other languages (Arabic, Japanese, Italian and Portuguese) was a surplus but by themselves would have hardly transformed the literary boom into mainstream. All this means, simply, is that whatever you do you have to work within the colonial structure of power and the colonial difference that was in place before you, me, Dussel, or Quijano were born. Consequently, suppose that Dussel's and Quijano's work will not indeed be as widely known as mine (although I believe that Dussel is widely known, though not so much in the circuits of cultural and postcolonial studies). Imagine then that *Local Histories/Global Designs* was never written or published. Still, Dussel's and Quijano's work would remain the same. So, the fact that *Local Histories/Global Designs* was published creates an interesting double bind. On the one hand it makes Dussel's and Quijano's work known in areas they were not known in before. On the other hand, it "takes advantage" of their work and *Local Histories/Global Designs* becomes better known than the epistemic sources from which my argument took its energy.

The situation is still more interesting when you consider the following scenario. I taught a graduate seminar, in Caracas, in 1999, in the School of Social Sciences. It was basically based on *Local Histories*. I put a considerable amount of reading in it by Quijano, Dussel and Rivera Cusicanqui. All of them were a novelty for students and faculty!! They had read something by Dussel, they had heard the name of Quijano, but they did not have the slightest idea of Rivera Cusicanqui. Now, the fact that I am considered mainstream and work in a prestigious American university gave me some credibility when I told them, "well, guys, you have to read these people, and many others like them. Just reading Lyotard, and Jameson, and Derrida and Kristeva won't do!" By the same token and because of the same reasons, Anzaldúa was totally unknown in various parts of Latin America where I lecture and teach seminars. Now, already an article was published in Argentina on Anzaldúa, Borges and Lamborghini, and my friends and colleagues at the Instituto Pensar, Universidad Javeriana de Bogotá, are working on

an invitation to Gloria Anzaldúa. I hope you can see in these examples the complexities and at the same time the possibilities of writing about and acting on the subalternization of knowledges and the colonial difference.

But that is not all. I am also doing my best to promote their work as much as I can. For example, *Dispositio* 51 published a dossier of Latin American thought that includes Rivera Cusicanqui (from Bolivia), Anibal Quijano (from Peru), Enrique Dussel (Argentina and Mexico), and Renato Ortiz (Brazil). I edited a book that will be published in Buenos Aires next month titled *Capitalism and the Geopolitics of Knowledge: Liberation Philosophy in the Contemporary Intellectual Debate*. It is interesting that the material I compiled in this book was, according the editors, unknown in Argentina. And in the case of Dussel, he is known but is known as the Dussel of the 1970s not what he did since late seventies, when he moved to Mexico. Furthermore, *Nepantla: Views from South* (2.3) published a long article by Quijano where he summarizes what he has been writing on coloniality of power since 1990, and has also an article by Dussel, an article by Santiago-Castro Gómez (from Universidad Javeriana) and another by Edgardo Lander, sociologist from Caracas, Universidad Central. All in all, I am also working on disseminating a certain type of critical thought, in Latin America, that is crucial for my own work.

Third, let me say something about the descriptive part of your question, since there is another kind of double bind here. While I am, no doubt, interested in changing the aspect of modern history that places the Hispanic culture in general in a subaltern position, I underlined in the book that this is not the colonial but the imperial difference. Spain occupies a double position in the history of the modern/colonial world. Subordinated to the Anglo/Protestant and Latin/Calvinist countries since the eighteenth century, it still retains the symbolic (and economic) power over Latin America and cannot be stripped off of its colonial past. It is not Bolivian capitals that are investing in Cuba and other countries of Latin America, but Spain, competing with other countries of the European Union while at the same time regaining a position lost three centuries ago. Thus, while it is necessary to insist on the relevance of the Renaissance and Spanish colonialism in the making of the modern/colonial world, it is also necessary to remember the simultaneity of the imperial and the colonial difference. Latin Americans and Latino/as are not certainly Spaniards as Martinicans and Guadalupans are not French or Jamaicans British. And of course I am not talking here about national or cultural difference, but *belle et bien*, of the colonial difference.

Now I can tell you that I had another motivation to write in English. As you know, the tango originated literally in the margins of Buenos Aires. In the long Avenida Corrientes, and moving from the margins to downtown, there was a mark and a limit indicating that the tango could not be played or danced beyond that borderland. It was considered aesthetically of bad taste, ethically dangerous and socially undesirable. When Parisians fell in love with the tango, all restrictions were lifted in Buenos Aires and the tango entered into the ballrooms of the same high society of a peripheral country that had previously banished the tango. You can read this example in two directions. Direction one, as an instruction of what to do to be successful when you belong to (or have been educated and socially marked as) a colonial or postcolonial society. Direction two, how to use the market (under the same conditions) to push forward projects that will contribute to undermine the coloniality of power and undo the colonial difference. All of that doesn't mean that I do not care to write in Spanish. To address this issue will require a different and complementary kind of argument. Although you did not ask this question let me tell you that I did, I still am and will continue to.

Delgado and Romero: In your book you address explicitly the problems of the hierarchies inherent in our understanding of "cultures and languages of scholarship" (namely English, German and French) and in fact you pose a number of important questions (243) regarding the teaching of Latin American literature. Should I teach in English or Spanish? You pose the question as a choice, but sometimes there is no choice, for the only way some disciplines can survive is by teaching their courses in English as part of some General Education (that is, the case of languages such as Russian, Hebrew, not to mention non-European languages). Moreover, in spite of all the interest in border thinking or "border theories," most English departments (and many social science departments) in the U.S. remain notoriously monolingual and ignorant of theoretical models that are applicable to countries other than those that formed the British Commonwealth. What would be a way out of this dilemma? What practical strategies could be implemented to ensure that border thinking really works from North to South, so to speak, and not always the other way round?

Mignolo: Can you imagine bilingual situations in English? English, like Sanskrit at one time in Asia and Latin at another time in Europe and North Africa, were the lingua-franca connecting a multitude of communities speaking other languages. Thus, English is a planetary language but it is not the "native" language of all English speakers, as I show in chapter seven. Thus, whoever speaks

English, yet English is not his or her “native” language, is a potential border thinker if he or she decides to exploit that epistemic potential instead of lamenting his or her epistemic inferiority. Now let’s approach these issues in a national (U.S.) as well as transnational scenario.

The social sciences in the U.S. may be monolingual (and monologic), but the scenario is totally different when you look at the international scene and think of globalization and the geopolitics of knowledge. That is, the social sciences are not ready yet to entertain the possibility of an-other logic and to change the idea that the epistemology underlying the social sciences is universal and, therefore, they shall be implanted globally in different parts of the world. Now, the planetarization of the social sciences since WW II (and by this I mean that the social sciences, like McDonald’s, have branches in different part of the world) not only means that Western models are being exported, it also means that the social sciences could be practiced in Japanese and English, Taiwanese and English, Spanish and English, etc. Here, like in any other domains, things could work in different directions even when the hegemonic power points toward only one direction. By this I mean that a given social scientist could write both in English and Japanese but, also, that when she writes in English most likely she will carry into her writing the “noises” and the dust of Japanese in its various dimensions. Or at least she will have the option to play at the intersection of both languages and the logic behind each language. On the other hand, she can choose to become indistinguishable from any distinguished British or U.S. sociologist. In the social sciences, like in any other domain in which the colonial difference has to be negotiated, there are several possibilities: adaptation, resistance or critical assimilation which implies “border thinking.” The strategy here is two sided. On the one hand, to recognize that English and the social sciences have a planetary dimension. And, on the other hand, to act *in, against* and *toward* a border epistemology in which the principles of the social sciences and of the English language are worked out in different directions, under different principles and aiming at different ends. It is a fact that non-native speakers of any language have to make a double effort to participate in another linguistic domain. When it comes to scholarship, it implies also to be able to be competent both in the linguistic and in the scholarly domain. While discussing this issue with my assistant she told me the following:

My father works in Cell Biology, and just last night he was talking about how good one of the Japanese journals is; yet even though the journal is now

TRANSLATED into English, people are still not familiar with the research being presented. So much so that researchers in this country use their ideas (with citation, of course) and receive more acknowledgement than the Japanese researchers. The opportunities for scholarship are there, but competent English speakers and writers are favored.

These strategies can of course be practiced at different levels and enacted toward social aims that we (you and I) may not support and/or would not or cannot be involved in. For instance, in Malaysia the word *jihad* (often translated as “holy war”) is being negotiated now with “corporate culture.” That is, corporate culture is there but it cannot be accepted in the same way that it is accepted, say, in Chicago or Los Angeles, where corporate culture is taken for granted. Jihad becomes the condition of possibility of an other thinking, of border thinking, when it is confronted and enacted with the global design imposed by corporate culture. One thing is sure for me in this example: that the meaning of and the practices under the label “corporate culture” will not be the same as the meaning and practices, in Chicago, under the same name. There will not be either a happy hybrid or a cheerful syncretism. And I doubt that corporate culture will end up swallowing up or erasing jihad. Most likely, jihad will survive by incorporating corporate culture unless corporate culture ends up converting jihad from holy war into market commodity (Bruce Lawrence, *Shattering the Myth: Islam Beyond Violence*, 1998). If this is the case, then capitalism and (neo)liberal ideology have no limits and no enemy and we have to think in different terms and concoct different strategies.

Now, you ask, can we implement to enact and orient border thinking toward decolonizing (liberating/emancipating) aims? Here is when the ethics and politics of teaching have to become the core concern of our daily life in the university. The university, many people say, is an ivory tower. So are the Pentagon and the College de France. There are many ivory towers that will crumble once we abandon them to pursue liberation projects outside of the university. Decolonization doesn't mean only to have a preferential option for the poor, an ideal that is shared by the theology of liberation as well as by the IMF and the World Bank. It means also to be aware that the discourses of the IMF and the World Bank and of CNN are adapting themselves to reproduce global coloniality. Decolonization, and decolonization of scholarship, imply a constant awareness (or vigilance as Derrida said about deconstruction) of the ethic and politics of research and teaching, at least in the Humanities, where critical reflections on knowledge and understanding still can be pursued. There are in my view four basic questions that

orient the strategies as well as ethics and politics of scholarship and teaching:

1. What are the problems of the past, linked to the present and contributing to reproduce domination and exploitation that I am in a condition to explore? How can my finding be implemented in changing how people think about it and, knowingly or not, act in daily life reproducing social injustice and inequity? For instance, colonization and the complicity between race and economy is a domain guiding the questions of my research and teaching.
2. What knowledge/understanding? That is, what I would like to know/understand and what shall I transmit in order to change the way of thinking about it that hides the colonial difference and the coloniality of power?
3. What method/theories? That is, what are the best ways to explore the problem, undue what has been reified and contribute to decolonize knowledge and liberate ways of thinking and understanding about human life and social history. As you can imagine, this problem is much larger than the (and in this case yes!!) academic skirmish, in the U.S., between cultural and literary studies. These are issues to entertain the publisher and the readers of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* but I do not think that they are relevant issues beyond that.
4. And the final question, "To what end?" I do believe that the first and the last question summarize the principles that shall guide critical approaches to knowledges in the Humanities. And of course be a guide also for critical reflections on knowledge and understanding in the natural sciences as well as in the professional schools.

Delgado and Romero: You replace the whole notion of "post-colonialism" and "post-colonial" with the expression "post-occidental" reason. Can you briefly explain why?

Mignolo: This question is related to your observations about modernity/modernities that you identified as a recurrent topic of my book. Briefly, post-colonialism presupposes "Orientalism" while in the Americas the question is "Occidentalism," the very condition of possibility of Orientalism. Without Occidentalism there is no Orientalism. Without coloniality there is no modernity. Modernity, Occidentalism and Coloniality are all members of the same club. However, there are important distinctions and conceptual alliances to be made. Let me mention two of them:

1. "Modernity" was a notion that contributed to the self-definition of post-Renaissance Europe in the time frame. "Modernity" implied the colonization of time and the invention of the "Middle Ages."
2. And "Occidentalism" was a notion that contributed to the self-definition of post-Renaissance Europe in the frame of space. "Modernity" implies also the colonization of space and the making of the colonial difference. "Modern times" and "Western Space" were the limits of a space of enunciation that in the name of Christianity (remember, Japhet in the Biblical prophecy was destined to expand, toward the West) implanted a particular conception of "Reason" that was consolidated from Saint Thomas to Descartes.

"Modernity," "Occidentalism" and "Reason" were the tools implemented in colonialization that defines the coloniality of power and produced the colonial difference. Thus, by "post-occidental reason" instead of "post-colonial" I intended to underline a few phenomena and to change a few principles of canonical understanding of Western and world history. First of all, current conceptions of post-colonialism are linked and presuppose the concept of "Orientalism," that is, the second stage of modernity, after the eighteenth century. Secondly, "Orientalism" cannot be conceived of without "Occidentalism." However, "Occidentalism" remained in the shadow once the philosophy of the Enlightenment turned the lights of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries off and re-defined Europe in time and space: the eighteenth century, the emergence of the nation-state after the French Revolution and the colonization of Africa and Asia. But of course, coloniality linked to Orientalism is only a part of the problem. The rules of the game had already been established by then. And they had been established in the sixteenth century when "The Indias Occidentales" (and not America!!!) emerged in the conceptual map of Christian cosmology and in the commercial map of mercantile capitalism. "Post-occidental reason" then is an invitation to rethink the historical articulation of Christianity (that generated the enlightenment, that generated Liberalism and Marxism) in Europe with the invention of the West, brought about by the colonization of the West Indies and, de facto, by establishing the conceptual limits of modernity/coloniality.

Let me close by reminding you that "post" (modern, colonial, Occidental) can always have two apparently opposed but complementary readings. On the one hand, "post" means that something already existing continues to be such, although there are enough

changes to justify the prefix “post.” Therefore, post-modernity indicates that modernity continues under new forms; post-coloniality indicates that coloniality continues under new forms; and post-Occidentalism that Occidentalism continues to be reproduced under new forms. On the other hand, “post” (modern, colonial and Occidental) designates critical intellectual projects that instead of reproducing under a new guise aim at countering and superseding the underlying principles of “Occidental reason.” The first set of meaning is apt to characterize the discourse of the World Bank and the IMF, that is, the new forms of global coloniality. The second set of meaning characterizes the critical responses to coloniality from the perspective of different local histories (e.g., Occidentalism from Latin America [although currently there are different takes on Occidentalism from Sub-Saharan Africa and China], Orientalism from India and the Middle West).

Delgado and Romero: Your book is, in fact, quite dialogic in its very structure—is constructed as a critical back-and-forth with an impressive number of intellectuals, writers and critics, past and present. Was that structure a conscious choice on your part, given its subject matter?

Mignolo: I would like to believe that the main contribution of the book, and the motivating force to write it, was precisely to “connect” critical discourses of Eurocentrism and globalization from different parts of the world. If my point of reference and theoretical anchor is a certain Latin American tradition of critical thought and the Latino/as experience and intellectual production in the U.S., I connected this with North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, post-partition India and, of course, the South of Europe. I structured the book as an “anti-Argentinean railroad model” for a couple of interrelated reasons. When the British installed the railroad in Argentina in the second half of the nineteenth century, it was part of the course of a growing British Empire. But, on the other hand, the “structure” of the railroad was very telling. The railroad connected several nodes from north-west to south-west, and from north to south of Argentina to Buenos Aires. Every single node was connected to Buenos Aires, which at its turn was connected by boat to London. But none of the nodes were connected among themselves. Now if you think about it you would realize that the geopolitics of knowledge has a similar structure. People from Latin America, North and South Africa, post-partition India and China, all of us connect with Europe first and if there is inter-connection among the nodes (e.g., Africa or Asia) it is “through” Europe. Well, I structured the book with the hope that, in the future, those of us who work on the institutional production of knowledge will remember that decolonization of knowledge is,

among other things, learning to think with, against and beyond the legacy of Western epistemology. There is an urgent necessity to connect the nodes among themselves and not only each node to Buenos Aires.

Delgado and Romero: You seem to be attracted to big scope projects that require a great deal of knowledge of “traditional” scholarship and yet, you always choose to study non-traditional aspects: the “darker” side of the Renaissance, alternative modernities, post-colonial reason, etc. Is that a consequence of your formation in Argentina and Europe and then your re-location in the U.S. academic world? Do you think your career would have developed in the same way if you had stayed in Argentina, or in other words, how has your own exile informed your thinking?

Mignolo: Thanks for asking this question. Although I have thought about the issues you raise, I never did it in a systematic way or in print. I have this much clear: that there are two clearly distinctive stages of my career and yet connected somehow in the underground. The first stage is my training in Argentina and “doctorat” in France, in semiotics and literary theory. My professors in Argentina were almost all of them of Marxist persuasion, and all of those of Marxist persuasion very much engaged in the New Left of the early sixties. However, the colonial structure of power is such that—as a student during the late sixties—I as well as many others dreamed with Europe, and particularly with France. True knowledge was there. Each time I picked up a book at the bookstore I had ordered from France was almost like an epiphany. But after a year in France I realized that all my friends, at the École des Hautes Etudes were from someplace else, Mexico, Portugal, North Africa, Palestine and even Germany, but not France! All of a sudden I began to understand the meaning of admiring France from Argentina and the meaning of being in France. There is so much to be added here now that massive migration has placed this problem at the forefront. However, while I was waking up to the structure of coloniality (remember, I was trained in Marxism but not in coloniality!) I kept working, however, on what was at that point mainstream, that is, semiotics, discourse analysis, literary theory, philosophy of science. I published three books, in Spanish, between 1978 and 1986; and a substantial amount of articles, in Spanish and English, since 1986, about these issues.

I came to the U.S. in 1973 and maintained that line of research and teaching for a significant number of years, let us say until the mid-eighties. The first epoch of *Dispositio* bears witness to that period. However, there was a seed planted during my first year in the U.S. that connected with my feelings, in France, of

being an Argentinean in France and looking back at myself, in Argentina, and my desire toward France. And that seed was planted in Bloomington, Indiana, where I spent a year and a half and during that year and a half Luis Dávila was a good friend and colleague of mine. At that point I not only did not know what “tenure” was, I had no idea what “Chicano-Riqueño” meant. Thus, my discovery of Chicano/Latino issues grew and redefined my early view of the colonial period. All of a sudden sixteenth century Mexico and twentieth century California were next to each other, in the same picture. At that moment, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance* began to take shape. Chapter two was the first chapter and if you look at that chapter after this narrative, you would realize that the colonial question as a problem under-wrote semiotics, as a method.

But, the simple answer to your question is yes, and I have made an effort to make it clear in different forms. “Locus of enunciation” is a consequence of this experience. I have also mentioned how the years in France, my settlement in the U.S. and the awareness of the Hispanic/Latino issues help me in understanding that as the son of Italian immigrants I never felt that Argentina was my country. Apparently, exile, early group-reading of Marx in Argentina and the “discovery” of the colonial question in the U.S. came together to orient my epistemic desires toward non-traditional questions without relinquishing traditional knowledge. Last but not least, my attraction toward “big scope projects” is also a consequence of the experiences that lead to the “discovery” of coloniality. The power of coloniality and, therefore, of the coloniality of power, lies in the persistence and the hegemony of “macro-narratives.” In order to undo them and be able to do something beyond their scope, you need to deal with the structure and content of knowledge that have been naturalized in those macro-narratives. Expressions such as Western Civilization, two thousands years of Christianity, Early Modern period, modern world-system; the history of philosophy and of the cultures of scholarship, etc. imply a well packed amalgam of the structure of knowledge and the order of events. The unpacking (that is, what I call decolonization of knowledge) requires its own structure to be inhabited in order to constantly reveal what they constantly hide.

Delgado and Romero: What is your next project?

Mignolo: *The Darker Side of the Renaissance* lead naturally to *Local Histories/Global Designs*. I feel now that there are—in between these two books—still many issues to be expanded and others to be explored. If you had asked me one year after finishing *The Darker Side of the Renaissance* it would have been impossible for me to tell you that I was planning *Local Histories*. It just came out. I do not

know what the “result” would be, in one or two years, of a “project” that doesn’t have a name yet, not quite yet a clear map. However, I felt that it was growing from the very moment in which I gave the manuscript of *Local Histories* to the press and was able to forget about it. Thus, in one or two years, when I send the next manuscript to the press I will be able to tell you what my project is now!