

WALTER D. MIGNOLO, RITA SEGATO AND CATHERINE E. WALSH (EDS.). *Aníbal Quijano: Foundational Essays on the Coloniality of Power*. Duke University Press, 2024.

The publication of *Aníbal Quijano: Foundational Essays on the Coloniality of Power* by Duke University Press is an event of major relevance for the study of Latin American critical thought today. This is especially true due to two central issues.

First, Quijano's work has functioned over the last thirty years as a catalyst for a transformation in critical thought, stemming from the formation of the network of thinkers known as the "Modernity/Coloniality Group." This group brought together various thinkers from diverse currents of critical thought (dependency theory, philosophy of liberation, postcolonial and subaltern thinking on Latin America, among others). Many of these meetings took place in US and Latin American universities and generated significant repercussions in both Latin American thought and "Latino" thought in the United States (I do not wish to position myself in any debate about the identities encompassed by that denomination in that context; it is used generically).

Second, paradoxically, and despite the shift that the publications arising from these meetings generated in critical thought in both Latin America and the United States, most of Quijano's published work remained untranslated into English, aside from some translations of his most important texts. Therefore, while his works exerted a profound influence, this had always been through such isolated translations or third-party commentaries. Hence the paramount importance of this work, as it allows the English-language reader a firsthand approach to one of the most influential thinkers on the contemporary scene of Latin American critical theory.

In turn, the importance of this volume lies in its comprehensive nature, as well as the significance of its editors, three authors who have been leading protagonists of the so-called "decolonial turn" (Walter Mignolo, Catherine Walsh, and Rita Segato). For all these reasons, the publication of this text constitutes an act of reparation of epistemic tools that allow us not only to critique the architecture of capitalist globalization but also to rethink categories for interpreting long-range and long-duration historical-political processes.

However, the importance of the publication also resides in the significance of the author himself. When attention is paid to the bio-bibliographical trajectory of Aníbal Quijano, his paths converge with the adventures and turns of Latin American critical thought. In turn, his figure represents what is shared by various thinkers of the continent: on the one hand, the impossibility of clearly distinguishing between "cloistered" academic activity and the relationships

these intellectuals maintain with their socio-political environment; and on the other, and stemming from that previous impossibility, the realization that his production is closely linked to the social, political, and cultural vicissitudes of Latin America.

Thus, the figure of Quijano traverses and is a protagonist of some of the region's salient debates, from the development/dependency controversy and the relationship between capitalism and socialism in Latin American countries, the heterodox interpretation that the Marxist tradition has had in Latin America (especially in the work of José Carlos Mariátegui, a signal author for him), to the proposals regarding the colonial world-system and the formulation of the notion of "coloniality of power" towards the end of the century.

The editors of the volume account for the influence of Quijano's work on the turn that Latin American thought has undergone in the fin-de-siècle context. Walter Mignolo, a scholar coming from the field of semiology but whose works far exceed this discipline, incorporates the Peruvian's concepts and has made the "decolonial option" a militant epistemic stance. Catherine Walsh has worked tirelessly for the formation of a critical perspective in Latin American cultural studies that does not submit to the mere importing of categories from cultural studies as they exist in canonical Euro-North American version. Rita Segato, taking up the category of "coloniality of gender" from María Lugones, carried out profound anthropological works that are highly influential in gender studies in the region.

That said, this review proposes three commentaries: first, a bio-bibliographical commentary on the author of the compilation, aiming to show the intertwining of his trajectory with the vicissitudes of Latin American thought; second, an analysis of some key concepts from the texts in the volume that make Quijano a crucial author for understanding the Latin American approach to the capitalist world-system, both in historical analysis and in the present; finally, I broach what seem to me to be some of the lost opportunities presented by such an important publication.

Quijano and Latin American Critical Thought

Quijano is an emergent figure of the so-called "sixties sensibility" described by Eduardo Devés Valdés in *El pensamiento latinoamericano en el siglo XX*. This phrase condenses a moment of social and intellectual transformation in which, during the so-called "long '60s" (the historical moment spanning from the Cuban Revolution in 1959 to the coup against Salvador Allende's government in 1973), a synergy (constructive and destructive) occurred between vari-

ous contestatory and critical currents of thought. These were characterized by a search for change and a rejection of the Latin American situation, as well as a sense that said change was imminent.

At least four currents starring in that synergy can be verified: social science schools associated with sociological-economic study from a historical-structural point of view (among which are the various strands of dependency theory); liberationism, whether in its pedagogical, theological, or philosophical branches; Latin American essayism, which experienced a renewal associated with the “boom” of Latin American literature; and finally, the nascent Latin American political science dedicated to the study of the State, political parties, and populism.

In that atmosphere of ideas, Quijano’s early production begins during a period of turmoil for the peasant movement in his country. Hence, his contributions focus on the socio-political subjectivities appearing in that context of social fragmentation. Likewise, as was customary throughout his work, his papers present a heterodox and critical Marxism that abjures dualism and “modernizing” visions.

The notions of “Marginal Pole” (*polo marginal*) and the analysis of “the cholo” (*lo cholo*), which Quijano engaged in the ‘70s, consist of highly original introductions to sociological analysis. In the former case, Quijano differs from some dependency theorists who emphasized the circulatory aspects of capital in the analysis of the continent’s relationships which furthered underdevelopment. On the contrary, this notion implies an analysis centered on labor (and thus, even within his heterodoxy, Quijano remains within Marxism) and, specifically, on the modes of super-exploitation of labor in the marginal capitalism of Latin America and the presence of a marginalized mass functional to the productive process.

The second concept can be understood as a germ of his ruptures with Eurocentric dualist conceptualizations. In this case, that dualism is confirmed in the indigenous/creole identities and the processes of *mestizaje* (miscegenation) that operate in transitions as modes of whitening (*blanqueamiento*). Conversely, Quijano’s analysis of *cholo* identity presents itself as a challenge by not considering itself merely a transitional stage in the process of cultural whitening.

In these two seminal proposals, some of the tendencies that the Peruvian would retain until his “coloniality of power” stage can already be glimpsed. For example, it is possible to discern a suspicion regarding modernizing and homogenizing discourse (which later will be thematized as a critique of scientific rationality) and with it, a critique of visions that understand modern societies in dualistic terms. In its place, Quijano would always advocate for a complexification of categories.

Towards the end of the '80s and the beginning of the '90s, Quijano would enter into dialogue with Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system theory, and, in a joint article of enormous importance, they proposed the idea of "Americanness" as the foundational moment for that global matrix of power.

The Matrix of Coloniality

Returning to the compilation, one can verify that it is a publication of enormous importance and depth because it presents, for English-speaking readers, a perspective that challenges canonical narratives on modernity and capitalist globalization (modern and contemporary). Although the article co-authored with Wallerstein is not included in this compilation, as it points out, at the birth of capitalism, modernity, and rationality, America is not simply a territory where modernity "is applied." Rather, the Conquest founds a new matrix of global power woven along two axes: the institution of relations between conquerors and conquered through the idea of race, and the articulation, through that difference, of all historical forms of labor hegemonized by capital.

In the decolonial turn that contemporary social theory has taken, Quijano's analysis of the notion of race plays a decisive role. Not only because of this notion's centrality in the naturalization of colonial domination and modern Eurocentrism, but because it is a device of power that allowed for a global classification of labor. One must always remember Quijano's (heterodox) Marxist origins, which lead him to pay special attention to that category. The racialization of the world population allowed the global pattern of power to assign specific forms of labor to different "races": wage labor for whites, serfdom or forced labor for Indigenous peoples, and slavery for Black people.

As stated earlier, Quijano abjures dualistic and modernizing visions, which allows him to formulate perhaps his most sophisticated sociological contribution: the notion of historical-structural heterogeneity. This way of understanding the social totality consists of a historicization of forms of organization, temporalities, and modes of production.

What appeared seminally in his texts framed by Dependency Theory is now fully developed in the social analysis of the coloniality of power: Quijano's Marxist heterodoxy leads him to reject not only a stage-ist vision in which different modes of production are replaced (from slavery one passes to feudalism and from this to capitalism), but also to reject the idea that capitalism "homogenizes" labor. On the contrary, race functions as a criterion for the division of labor that allows different modes of production to be included in the world cycle

of capital. Furthermore, with this, Quijano rejects ideas that present production in Colonial America as “remnants” of previous stages, demonstrating that it is the modern organization of the capitalist system that institutes those colonial forms of production.

Reprising ideas from his previous dependency theory, the introduction of race in relation to labor control, and the notion of historical-structural heterogeneity, the Peruvian author demonstrates that Latin American “underdevelopment,” along with labor precarity and super-exploitation, are constitutive aspects of the colonial matrix of capitalist power, which has always rested upon heterogeneous forms of labor disciplined through racialization. Therefore, he also demolishes the idea that capitalist expansion goes hand in hand with wage labor and democracy, when what is verified is that the capitalist system resorts to previous forms of exploitation to enhance capital accumulation.

Subjectivity, Epistemology, and Utopia

In several texts of the volume, Quijano also explores the way in which the coloniality of power is linked to forms of knowledge and forms of domination of subjectivity. Both “Coloniality of Power and Subjectivity in Latin America” and “Coloniality of Power and Modernity/Rationality” offer clues in this regard.

In both cases, the author works on the ways in which coloniality operates upon the imaginary of the dominated, given that Eurocentrism implies a specific rationality that separates the world into dualism (subject-object, reason-nature). Through this, not only is the cultural world of the colonized expropriated, leading them to despise their own knowledge (positioned as the “past” of truly rational knowledge), but it also allows for the exploitation of everything placed in the position of objectified passivity.

This Eurocentric perspective of knowledge imposes ironclad dichotomies that place not only nature as that which is “exploitable” and any knowledge that does not accept those dichotomies as primitive, but also associates one thing with the other: if the Other is dominated, it is because of their primitive proximity to that which can be measured, worked upon, and exploited.

Thus, Quijano offers not only a diagnosis but some type of liberating perspective. Reprising the category of *cholo* from his early writings, the Peruvian author proposes a socialization of power in a re-originary key, especially regarding the Andean concept of *Buen vivir* (Good living).

The author starts from the diagnosis of the coloniality of power to understand the way in which Latin American states are constitutively failed; since, due to their origin as a product of internal colonization, they can never be constituted

as nation-states. At that point, in what Quijano calls the “Arguedian knot” (in reference to the Peruvian writer José María Arguedas), politics of utopia are knotted with identity, outside of any type of essentialism. It is not a return to pre-colonial times nor to pre-constituted identities, but an invitation to the struggle to produce new historical and social imaginaries and alternative rationalities, in the face of the invisibilization produced by coloniality.

Some Critical Views

As mentioned, the publication constitutes a monumental milestone that enriches the theoretical stock available to Anglophone readers. At the same time, I would like to present two limitations I find in the way the compilation is approached.

The volume focuses especially and deeply on the texts that produced the “decolonial turn” and on the theorization of the coloniality of power. With this, however, and perhaps inadvertently, it does not allow for a survey of the rich, changing, and even sometimes contradictory trajectory of Aníbal Quijano as a Latin American intellectual. Often, in academic works, the perspective of the coloniality of power is seen as a notion arisen *ex nihilo* in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s. However, this perspective draws from diverse traditions of Latin American thought and so-called “Latin Americanism.”

In fact, as mentioned previously, the Peruvian author coincides with many others from the region in his dual facet as academic and militant. Undoubtedly, there are currents that advocate for an academic “normalization” that turns intellectuals into mere professionals, but Quijano’s position as a militant intellectual is far from being an exception in the Latin American scene. An example of this is the very formation of the Modernity/Coloniality Group, which brought together intellectuals of very diverse trajectories.

For this very reason, approaching this author’s thought in the light of his adventures in the different Latin American schools could have enriched the volume enormously. Especially because Quijano largely embodies the vicissitudes of Latin American thought, from debates on urban marginality and development, and dependency theory—which later allowed him to propose the notion of historical-structural heterogeneity—to the theory of the coloniality of power. Presenting these latter concepts as finished developments untied from their moments of production prevents a full understanding. In turn, presenting and situating Quijano historically allows one to avoid “culturalist” and essentialist misinterpretations of his thought, given that his intentions always

remained within an analysis of capitalism and the main engines that led to its modern globalization.

A second limitation I find has to do with the very historicization of the debates on the coloniality of power. The approach provided by the editors, while totally relevant and perceptive, works upon the same narrative tropes that configured the perspective of the coloniality of power more than two decades ago. In effect, at the same time, the framework tends to emphasize the very readings that Mignolo, Walsh, and Segato took and popularized from that perspective.

Over time, since the meetings of the Modernity/Coloniality Group, its consolidation and solidification (and its subsequent dissolution), diverse works have succeeded one another within this area and, in fact, there are those who already speak of several “generations” of decolonial scholars. Clearly, this area of work has proven highly fruitful, though not without internal disputes. Perhaps, also, the price to pay for having such authoritative pens in charge of the introduction is that those disputes and the diverse generations after the first group cannot be portrayed accurately, given that they themselves have been involved in them.

The critical observations I might have about the compilation could have been remedied with a more extensive preliminary study that accounts for Quijano’s intellectual history and all the disputes that the coloniality of power opened in diverse generations of work.

Conclusion

Nevertheless, despite these limitations, it must be recognized that the compilation undoubtedly opens a horizon with its inclusion of works that look toward the future. Therefore, the fact that it includes not only texts critical of the colonial matrix of power but also some that offer possibilities of alternative existence through the epistemic subversion of the “coloniality of knowledge” is laudable.

Aníbal Quijano: Foundational Essays on the Coloniality of Power results, therefore, in an indispensable volume that provides the English-language reader with primary sources for working with the perspective of the coloniality of power, which significantly transformed the field of contemporary Humanities and Social Sciences. At the same time, it functions as a theory generated from the Global South that crosses borders toward the North, performing in practice a decolonization of knowledge and, with it, of our social existence.

The value of this work resides in the insistence, so often mentioned by Quijano, that the problems of the present (and those dragged along historically) cannot be solved with the epistemological tools that helped to create them. In this sense, the Peruvian author reminds us that power is not an abstract sub-

stance, but is embodied in bodies, in territorial conflicts, and in the alternative memory of the defeated. Furthermore, this defeat is not only not definitive, but in the conditions of existence of those peoples lies the possibility of liberation.

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GABRIELA LEITE. *Daughter, Mother, Grandmother, and Whore*. Translated by Meg Weeks. Duke University Press, 2024.

Gabriela Leite's autobiography is one of the most significant documents for understanding the formation of the prostitutes' movement in Brazil, as well as its internal tensions, political shifts, and struggles for recognition in a country marked by gender coloniality, Christian morality, and state violence in its many forms.

The book, originally released in 2009 to the Brazilian public, is now being published by Duke University Press in 2024, translated by Meg Weeks, with a preface by Carol Leigh, notes by the translator, and an introduction co-authored by her, Laura Rebecca Murray, and Esther Teixeira. The texts that precede the original writings illuminate for foreign audiences the social, political, and cultural context that was contemporary to Gabriela as well as what we experience today in Brazil. It also mentions her transnational connections and how she was perceived and viewed. However, the densification of these propositions takes on other contours through her whore-writing.

Unlike narratives that moralize this profession through metaphors of "deviation" or "social tragedy", Gabriela's work elaborates a historical counter-narrative about the body, work, morality, motherhood, friendship, politics, and language. In doing so, it strains the boundaries between intimacy and the public sphere, between autobiography and manifesto, between personal memory and collective genealogy. In fact, everything seems to be collective when it comes to the co-founder of the Rede Brasileira de Prostitutas (Brazilian Network of Prostitutes; RBP).

In this sense, this is not just an autobiography; it is also a historical document, a political analysis, a memoir, an urban chronicle, and a treatise on philosophy and ethics written from a social position whose legitimacy is often denied. Gabriela follows in the lineage of Southern feminist epistemologies, whose situated existences and experiences construct, following the understanding of territorialization and deterritorialization, an affective cartography, as proposed by Jan Simon Hutta (2020). The geographical topography described by the author in her travels between São Paulo, Minas Gerais, and Rio de Janeiro merges