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# De-Linking: Don Quixote, Globalization and the Colonies

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# DE-LINKING: *DON QUIXOTE*, GLOBALIZATION AND THE COLONIES

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Walter D. Mignolo

*Don Quixote* is a “literary” achievement of a European historical process and a major literary contribution of Europe to the world and to diverse human histories and civilizations. *Don Quixote* was to Europe what pyramids were to the Egyptians, or calendars to the makers and carriers of Mayan civilization. At the height of European nationalism and the particular articulation of Eurocentrism that nationalism nourished (e.g., nation-state building and values following the U.S. and French revolutions), *Don Quixote* and the other masterpieces of European literature were all works in modern imperial languages, grounded in Greek and Latin traditions. These historical processes, especially the consolidation of modern imperial languages and the celebration of Greek and Latin, were simultaneous with the rejection of the debt that European intellectual history owed to the Arabic translation of Greek authors. The simultaneity of both processes contributed to the great achievements of humanity and to the dichotomy between the accumulation of money and the accumulation of meaning that put Western Europe at the center of global capitalism and global epistemology (which was the theoretical justification of artistic practices— from painting to literature, from music to sculpture). Some of the great achievements in European history were also simultaneous with the destruction and disavowal of the achievements of the Aztecs and Incas, as well as with the denial of humanity to Africans transported as slave labor to the New World. The celebration of Cervantes’s achievement in

*Don Quixote* shall not—at this point in history—continue to reproduce the darker side of the European Renaissance.

I am asking, therefore, a reading of *Don Quixote* that is attentive to the demands that motivated Cervantes to write it. How can we link the present of Cervantes to our own present? My thesis is that Cervantes was experiencing the emergence of the sovereignty of the modern subject that rejected the authority of Theology. He was living in the moment of transition from Theology to “Ego-logy” (that René Descartes formulated in philosophical language a few decades after the publication of *Don Quixote*). Today, however, we are all living during a different kind of transition. This transition is highlighted by the coming into being of the decolonial subject. “Coming into being” translates to the decolonization of being. If, then, a decolonial subject is emerging in our era, when was that subject colonized? The paradox is that the coloniality of being—the colonization of subjects in the modern world—was one of the consequences of the European Renaissance and the expansion of European imperial/colonial designs. Cervantes wrote *Don Quixote* approximately one century after the colonization of America (for some) and the invention of America (for others).

One reading available to us today is within a paradigm of coexistence rather than “a new reading” within the paradigm of Western genres, thought, sensibility, and the very concept of literature. The game of solving all the problems within Eurocentered paradigms of thought that “think about” the *others* is over. The *others* began to think for themselves in relation to Europe almost five centuries ago, when they realized that the “wonderful” solutions Europeans had for their lives were not convincing to them. That happened in the Americas in the sixteenth century and continues to happen in Iraq in the twenty-first century, only it is not Europe but the U.S. that is continuing the mission toward a future of glory and happiness for all. Thus, the *other* began to think a long time ago, but it was shut off. Of course, why would European men take into consideration what other people thought if they had the solution for all of them? The Europeans knew how to *manage* happiness for all.

Waman Puma de Ayala, a Quechua speaker from Yancavalica (a community near Cuzco that was the center of the Incanate or the Inca Empire, in Eurocentered vocabulary), offers an anchor to speak from a paradigm of coexistence. A contemporary of Cervantes, Waman Puma is struggling not to assert the modern subject but, rather, to decolonize the colonial subject. Of the same generation as Cervantes, he

finished in 1616 and sent to Philip III a manuscript consisting of drawings and texts written in broken Spanish, titled *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno*. It was a story of indigenous people of the Andes, partially or badly understood by Spanish chroniclers; a story that was necessary for the establishment of a good government, ruled and shared by Spaniards and “Indians” (the generic name given by the Spaniards to the diversity of Aymara- and Quechua-speaking communities). The point here is that while Cervantes, in Spain at the inception of modern Europe, was contributing to the formation of the modern subject, released from theological authority, Waman Puma, in the colonies, was doing something similar but at the same time different. He was striving to decolonize Quechua and Aymara subjects. Put in different words, while Cervantes was critiquing Spain *in Spain*—imperial formation from inside the empire—and liberating the subject from Theology entrenched with imperialism (see Frederick de Armas’s essay in this volume), Waman Puma was critiquing imperial/colonial formation *in the colonies*. Cervantes’s subjectivity was formed in the legacies of Greek, Latin, and Castilian (as one of the six European and imperial vernacular languages). Waman Puma’s subjectivity was formed in the memories of Quechua and Aymara, disrupted by the invasion of Castilian languages, political theory, subjectivity, and rapacious economic interests. The disturbing complexity of Waman Puma’s text parallels the well-crafted, layered mirror-effects and humorous *Don Quixote*, but for different reasons. Waman Puma was thinking, drawing, and writing at the very crack of the colonial difference: a spatial epistemic break irreducible to the mono-topic and linear time of the European construction of its own history, from Greece to Rome to modern capitalist empires of the Atlantic (Spain and England mainly, but also Holland and France). Waman Puma introduced something I would like to call (after Mary Gossy’s talk) “the decolonial queer” in the precise sense that Waman Puma disrupts, on the one hand, the imperial norms that the Spaniards intended to force upon well-established Andean society in its entire order of life and, on the other, introduces the decolonial principle of thinking (e.g., decolonial thinking) that has never stopped but was silenced by modern and imperial epistemology from the European Renaissance until now.

Thus, instead of reading *Don Quixote* from the principles of knowledge and understanding inherited from Greek and Latin—that since the European Renaissance and through European imperial expansion, from religion to economy, from subjectivity to knowledge, was assumed

to be universal—I will read it *from* the colonies, from the silenced epistemology introduced by Waman Puma which, in the twentieth century, we find in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Vine Deloria, Jr.'s *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1973), and Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderland/La Frontera* (1987). I will read it from a paradigm that is not reducible to the hegemony of Western thought from the Renaissance to today or anchored in Greece, Rome, and Jerusalem. This paradigm is "pluri-versal": it emerges from the histories of languages, epistemologies, and subjectivities that in the past five-hundred years had to deal with the expansive move of Western languages, epistemologies, and subjectivities (around which political theory and political economy have been imagined and implemented). It is the paradigm of decolonial thinking.

In relation to one of the questions asked during the Roundtable pointing toward my privileged situation at Duke University as a "white" person, I should say that I am in part *renouncing my privileges*. As a Third World (Argentinian) person of European descent (who is neither European nor Black nor Indian) who was trained through the reading of Greek, Latin, and modern European texts—in Argentina first and then in France—as if there was no other way of thinking than the way Europeans thought, I could embrace the marginal privileges and (like Condoleeza Rice or Alberto Gonzalez) join the elite in power. However, while my training was forced upon me (I did not choose to be born in such and such a place or to study this and that in high school), now I am renouncing the imposed privileges. I am learning to unlearn. I prefer to start thinking based upon Waman Puma, Fanon, and Anzaldúa, instead of doing it with Aristotle or Plato, Kant or Bourdieu as my intellectual guides. I will then go the other way round. Thinking from Waman Puma, I will interpret *Don Quixote*, Kant, Marx, and Foucault. Decolonial thinking means, precisely, performing a decolonial shift: shifting from the imperial/colonial epistemology as well as from the internal imperial critiques by Las Casas, Cervantes, Marx, Foucault, and so on. Decolonial thinking is the freeing and the clearing of the coloniality of being, and that cannot be done from the perspective of Aristotle, Cervantes, Marx, etc. It has to be done from the perspective of people like Waman Puma, Fanon, and Anzaldúa. There is an irreducible difference between the diversity of imperial/colonial thinking (usually referred to as Western thought) and decolonial thinking. That difference is not cultural but colonial. It is indeed the colonial difference that, through racism, was built from the impe-

rial perspective, and in which critical minds like Las Casas and Marx have been caught.

My references to Foucault, below, shall not be taken as a call to authority (Cervantes precisely taught us to question authority), but as a reference to someone whose opinions and arguments I respect. Foucault's arguments are inscribed in the genealogy of Cervantes. It is not surprising that Foucault was able to read Cervantes in the way he did. Here I am attempting even to de-link Foucault and open up a new space, the freeing and the clearing of the coloniality of being that Waman Puma so masterfully blew up (and paid the price). I inscribe myself, then, in the decolonial paradigm, a paradigm of coexistence irreducible to the linear changes of *epistemés* (as Foucault had it). I am also referring to the emergence of the decolonial paradigm of coexistence, a spatial epistemic break, and stating that this break was introduced by Waman Puma. The insistence on coexistence means that it is irreducible to the chronological celebration of *newness* (e.g., a *new* episteme, a *new* paradigm) that characterizes the timeline, spatially restricted, of modern European imperial formations (once again, from Greece and Rome, from Greek and Latin to the Atlantic capitalist empires and to vernacular European imperial languages).

The *decolonial shift* is not a new paradigm, allow me to insist, but a *paradigm-other* that emerged from the spatial epistemic break in the sixteenth-century Spanish colonies and was rearticulated in British and French colonies in Africa and Asia since the nineteenth century. The decolonial shift means thinking from the colonial difference (not cultural, but colonial); that is, from the space that imperial epistemology classified as the place of no-thinking, the place of the barbarians, the inferiors, the primitives who had to learn to think by studying Greek and Latin and modern European imperial languages. It is from that space, the space out-of-history, silenced, epistemically disavowed, that I intend to respectfully read *Don Quixote*.

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A set of narrative strategies anchored the ideological and aesthetic impact and enduring effect of *Don Quixote*. First is the consecration, by the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries, of alphabetic literacy and its consequences for the composition of a complex and multilayered narrative. Second is the consecration of the printing press by the same period, reinforcing alphabetic literacy.

Vernacular languages emerging from Greek and Latin made possible the canonical works of “literature” (in general, as alphabetical written text in European imperial languages) that were recognized all over the non-European world thanks to the colonial expansion of European countries that produced substantial literary genius. Third, *Don Quixote* introduced various fractures with literary norms inherited from the European Middle Ages, particularly the rapid growth of alphabetic literacy around the twelfth century. Cervantes explicitly addressed several of these fractures in the preface to the first part of *Don Quixote*. Fourth, Cervantes worked with the emergence of a new kind of readership, particularly the reader of “popular literature.” At that time in Spain people read chivalric romances. Cervantes published *Don Quixote* roughly one-hundred-and-forty years after the introduction of the printing press in Europe, which the prologue takes into account. Fifth, the fracture between fictional narratives (chivalric romance) and the daily life that Don Quixote confronts also structures the entire narrative, with Sancho Panza as a mediator between the two worlds. It disrupts the basic assumptions of a denotative philosophy of language that has ruled the Greco-Roman and Christian politics of knowledge ever since Plato. The disjunction between the fictional narratives embraced by Don Quixote and his everyday life is complemented and complicated by the mirror-effect of Don Quixote learning at the beginning of the second part, when he is the reader of his own adventures. This particular fracture is indeed twofold. On the one hand, there is the fracture in enunciation that rejects the supra-subject constraints of “authority” (e.g., the refusal in the prologue to comply with the requirements of quotations, references, notes, etc., and at the same time, the affirmation of the sovereignty of a new subjectivity that was described as the modern subject). On the other hand, it contributes to the displacement of the hegemony of Theological principles of knowledge and reality toward a new politics of knowledge that I would describe as Ego-logical (e.g., secularization, the autonomy of reason, and the authority of the individual). It is this fracture, in all its complexity within European history, that Michel Foucault picked up in his introduction to *Les mots et les choses* when he observes:

*Don Quixote* is the first modern work of literature, because in it we see the cruel reason of identities and differences make endless sport of signs and similitudes; because in it language breaks off its old kinship with things and enters into that lonely sovereignty from which it will reappear, in



its separated state, only as literature; because it marks the point where resemblance enters an age which is, from the point of view of resemblance, one of madness and imagination. Once similitude and signs are sundered from each other, two experiences can be established and two characters appear face to face.<sup>1</sup>

There is one particular instance of the concepts “two experiences” and “two characters” that I would like to push further. To do so, I need to de-link from the history and experiences of Western Christian and secular Europe and their corresponding conceptual structures and structure of feelings; that is, from a cosmology grounded in the languages and experiences of European men. Other histories and experiences whose conceptual structures and structure of feelings, grounded in language and experiences alien to European men, were silenced because they were considered inferior, from the perspective of European cosmologies. The imperial perspective was assumed to be the only valid one and therefore superior. To de-link means to make visible coexisting paradigms of thought that have been silenced and disavowed. I will read *Don Quixote* from paradigms of coexistence. Waman Puma de Ayala, in colonial Peru at the time of Cervantes, will show us the way.

However, we should remember an intermediary step taken indirectly by Jorge Luis Borges and followed up by Michel Foucault. Borges, who wrote several pieces on Cervantes and *Don Quixote*, also wrote a piece on a certain Chinese encyclopedia in which the animal kingdom was classified in such a way that it made Foucault laugh. But it was precisely the fracture, the disruption of the classificatory logic invented by Borges and attributed to an imaginary Chinese encyclopedia, that Foucault linked to the disruption of a naturalized conception of space produced by Velásquez in *Las Meninas* and by Cervantes in the second part of *Don Quixote*, when the character in the novel is able to read his own adventures, narrated in the first part, which had already been published. Foucault’s laugh and Borges’s classificatory “un-logic” may not be in the same epistemic space. Perhaps Foucault was not giving Borges full credit; or better yet, Foucault was not in the right conditions to perceive Borges’s decolonial shift. Perhaps Borges smiled at Foucault’s fresh naiveté and at the fact that while Cervantes and Foucault were fracturing from inside the logic of Western thought, Borges was playing a different game, a game that was closer to the



rules established by Waman Puma than by those established by Cervantes and followed up by Foucault.

*Don Quixote* was published at the peak of drastic changes in European sensibilities and subjectivities. Ego-logy was taking over Theology, and the formation of the secular subject was displacing the formation of the religious subject. Secular philosophy was taking over the role of Theo-logical philosophy. The Theo-logical and Ego-logical politics of knowledge are the overarching epistemic frames that shaped political theory, political economy, aesthetics, and the entire domain of subjectivity, from racial and gender configurations to the very idea of “subject” itself. In other words, de-linking means to read *Don Quixote*, recognizing but not accepting the rules of the game in which *Don Quixote* was written and has mainly been read until today. De-linking means to admire *Don Quixote* as an outsider, playing a different game marked by a diversity of “experiences”—not the experiences of the internal history of Europe, but those of the colonies where, for example, the primacy of alphabetic writing, the printing press, and the authority of colonial languages were more of a problem than a victory. The problem was that people without letters were described and evaluated as a people without history, and, of course, without literature.<sup>2</sup> Foucault’s “two experiences” and “two characters” points to the fracture within European history and not to the fracture between Europe and the colonized areas of the world since the sixteenth century (including today’s U.S. contribution to that long Western and capitalist imperial legacy). Borges de-linked. Foucault co-opted Borges within the mono-logic (in its internal diversity) of Western thought. Waman Puma most likely did not know Cervantes, but he knew that his way of thinking was not the same as that of Las Casas and other Spanish missionaries. Cervantes was critical of Western legacies. Las Casas was critical of Spanish conduct in the Indies. But Waman Puma introduced a way of thinking that was not grounded in Western legacies, unlike Las Casas and Cervantes. Waman Puma was *facing* Western memories while Las Casas and Cervantes were *enduring* them. For Borges, the Western legacy was one among many (if, of course, the closest), and that explains the planetary dimension of his thoughts and narratives.

Since the European Renaissance, including its darker side (the “discovery” of America), the dominant perspective on knowledge about the world and human societies was framed by Theology. The trivium and the quadrivium were the master models of understanding. Secularization and the displacement from the Theo-logical to the Ego-logi-

cal conceptualization of knowledge and understanding were advanced by Francis Bacon (*Novum organum*, 1620) and René Descartes (*Discours de la méthode*, 1636) in the first half of the seventeenth century. Together with Cervantes, who preceded both, they shifted the geography of knowledge from Theology to a secular Philosophy and Science (grounded in Ego-logy) that is still in full force today. The postmodern critique of modernity (à la Foucault) primarily questions the authority of Theo- and Ego-logical macro-narratives and the homogeneity of the subject, but within the same rules imposed by the Theo-logical and Ego-logical politics of knowledge. It never attempted to *de-link* but, rather, to *correct* basic assumptions regarding totality and homogeneity that it displaced toward the singular and the fragments. In other words, the Theo-logical and Ego-logical politics of knowledge shaped what is generally understood as “modernity” and, consequently, what is understood to be “postmodernity.”

Why should one *de-link* instead of offering a new interpretation of *Don Quixote* that attempts to correct previous interpretations? Why not remain within the same logical and political game; that is, why not remain within the bubble of the *Truman Show* instead of moving away, *de-linking* like Waman Puma and Borges did? Cervantes himself offers the entry point to this need and possibility (although he himself fell short of his own intuition) by attributing the narrative of *Don Quixote* to Cide Hamete Benengeli. Thus, the original narrative was in Arabic, not in Spanish. The Spanish version published in 1605 is supposed to be a translation of the original narrative in Arabic. But things get more complicated. At the beginning of the second part, the discussion of the first part between the graduate from Salamanca, Don Quixote, and Sancho Panza about the translation into Spanish of the original in Arabic is no longer part of the original narrative. It looks like a narrative by the translator, since the reader does not know to what extent the translator and Cide Hamete Benengeli worked together or knew each other. Foucault’s speculation on resemblances, similitude, and signs is disrupted by the entry of an alien character—the Arabic language. There is, of course, a philosophical tradition in Arabic built on the translation of Greek philosophy. However, that tradition does not lead directly to Cervantes, Bacon, and Descartes. It leads to Ibn Sina (Avicenna) (Central Asia), al-Ghazali (Iran and Iraq), and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) (Andalucia and Morocco). History is not an ascending linear move from any origin to an only and unique present. Greco-Arabic philosophy coexists with Greco-Latin philosophy. It is only from a

Western perspective that reality may look like that. Not from Borges's perspective, either. In a way, Cervantes himself is in part guilty of the sin. What is relevant here is that the original narrative is in Arabic and not in Latin. An original narrative in Latin would also have required a translation into Spanish. However, it would not have introduced the linguistic, theological, and philosophical fracture of a language like Arabic, which is linked to the Quran while Latin is linked to the Bible. Translation into Spanish from Arabic or Latin would always fulfill the function of consolidating the Castilian language, which Elio Antonio de Nebrija had formalized over a hundred years before, and aided by Bernardo José de Alderete, who wrote the first history of the language. However, Castilian is a language derived from Latin and inscribed in Greco-Latin memories. Arabic is not and was not. What are the implications (that Cervantes did not take to its logical conclusion) of presenting *Don Quixote* as a narrative in Arabic written by a *morisco*?

There are no specific references or indications that Cide Hamete Benengeli was relying upon or dialoguing with the philosophical tradition in Arabic (e.g., Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, al-Ghazali, and, of course, the Quran). Of particular interest would be Ibn Rushd (Averroes), who lived from 1126 to 1198. He, like Cervantes, was from Andalusia. One of Averroes's main legacies was his defense of philosophy against the attack of dogmatic theologians, arguing that there is not, nor should there be, an incompatibility between philosophy and religion. Or, he could have engaged with Averroes's commentaries on Aristotle's topics, rhetoric, and poetics.<sup>3</sup> Instead, Cervantes, as a good man educated in Latin language and Greek-Latin legacies (instead of Greek-Arabic ones), focused on the conflicts between history and poetry.<sup>4</sup> The good Sansón Carrasco, graduate of Salamanca (one of the first European universities of Christian and Latin foundation, 1255), discussed with Don Quixote and Sancho the narratives of the first part of the story by Cide Hamete Benengeli. He replies to Don Quixote's complaints about certain parts of the veracity of the narrative by saying:

[T]rue...but it is one thing to write as a poet and another to write as a historian: the poet can recount or sing about things not as they were, but as they should have been, and the historian must write about them not as they should have been, but as they were, without adding or subtracting anything from the truth (Edith Grossman translation, p. 476).

It is not clear if this chapter is part of the original narrative by Cide Hamete Benengeli or a translator intervention. However, the dilemma of writing poetry or history was not an Arabic legacy in which, supposedly, Cide Hamete Benengeli was inscribed. Or was he just writing in Arabic but with a Greco-Latin memory? Was Cide Hamete Benengeli a sort of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega upside down, who was also writing in Spanish in Andalucia at the beginning of the seventeenth century, although inscribing Inca memories in his narrative? We know why Inca Garcilaso inscribed Inca memories in Castilian languages, but we do not have any idea of why Cide Hamete Benengeli would write in Arabic to erase memories inscribed in Arabic language.

The distinction between history and poetry introduced by Carrasco was by no means universal, although it is assumed and presented as such in *Don Quixote*. Thus, the fact that the original narration is authored by Cide Hamete Benengeli is either a superficial curiosity, since the categories of thought in the Arabic language are totally absent, or it is a blatant act of colonization, since Cide Hamete Benengeli seems to be, like Cervantes, someone who is inscribed in the Latin and Christian tradition. Recognizing this simple fact brings to the foreground what is absent and silenced: the differential theoretical issues inscribed in other languages and memories (Arabic in this case, but also Chinese, Bengali, Aymara, Urdu, etc.).

Let's take one example of rationality outside of European assumptions about reason. The story that follows was told by German writer Peter Bischel.

A young Balinese became my primary teacher. One day I asked him if he believed that the history of Prince Rama—one of the holy books of the Hindus—is true.

Without hesitation, he answered it with "Yes."

So you believe that the Prince Rama lived somewhere and some-when?

I do not know if he lived, he said.

Then it is a story?

Yes, it is a story.

Then someone wrote this story—I mean: a human being wrote it? I answered and felt triumphant, when I thought I had convinced him.

But he said: *It is quite possible that somebody invented this story. But true it is, in any case.*

Then—I replied—it is the case that Prince Rama did not live on this earth?

What is it that you want to know?, he asked. Do you want to know whether the story is true, or merely whether it occurred?<sup>5</sup>

I can imagine that Sansón Carrasco, graduate of Salamanca (equivalent to graduating from Harvard today), would have dismissed the young Balinese teacher as someone still living in the mountains, disconnected from civilization. I can imagine that the young Balinese teacher (in the twenty-first century) would consider any Sansón Carrasco of our day irrational. “What is with these people who cannot distinguish what is true from what happened?,” he would most likely ask. We are here in the terrain of de-linking; that is, putting hegemonic naturalized belief (in Christianity as well as in secular sciences and Western philosophy—remember, the Greek-Latin tradition translated into modern/imperial European languages) in its regional and partial place.

Conceptual de-linking begins by seeing through the assumptions that the world is what my indoctrinated perspective says it is, and that any other perspective either doesn't exist or, if it does, is dangerous because it is different. It consists in thinking (a) from the absent perspectives and (b) in critical perspective to the philosophical assumptions that cast them (absent perspectives) as absent. Translate epistemology into racism and you will understand what I am referring to: people of color are absences and silences or, in the best possible world, recognized as “minorities.” To assume that the ways in which truth and fiction were conceived in modern Europe (like Sansón Carrasco does) were universally valid may have disastrous consequences. A century after the expulsion of the Moors from the Iberian Peninsula, Cervantes was certainly aware of the confrontations between Latin and Arabic, and Christianity and Islam. The century of Christian and Castilian expansion (a century reigned by Charles V and Philip II) was successful in reducing to absence or silence everything that was not Western Christian and inscribed in the Greco-Roman tradition, a self-appointed supremacy that was supported by the economic success of mercantile capitalism.

Four hundred years after the publication of *Don Quixote* we should celebrate it as a European contribution to the achievements of human creativity and philosophical insights. However, in light of more than fifty years of the second wave of decolonization and the increasing numbers and characters of social movements contesting neoliberal globalization and proposing another globalization (which is indeed taking place around the world by intellectual and social movements that

are de-linking from the totalitarian economic and neoliberal designs, implementations, and narratives of its “beneficial” consequences), we have the responsibility to bring to the foreground the silences and the absences that both literary critics and historians reproduce in the name of *Don Quixote’s* literary values as a monument of Spanish national history or a monument of Western civilization. In this context, Cervantes’s political move should precede the attention that has been devoted to the structure of the novel itself. Here, I am trying to follow Cervantes’s teaching and ask what would be the twenty-first century equivalent of what Cervantes did at the beginning of the seventeenth? I see two possible answers to this question. One would be the postmodern answer, inscribed in the same European history of Cervantes and *Don Quixote*, which questions the very principles of modernity that Cervantes contributed so much to install in the transition from the Theo- to the Ego-politics of knowledge and understanding. This was precisely Foucault’s insight in his prologue to *Les mots et les choses*. The other answer would be decolonial rather than postcolonial in nature. The decolonial carries more weight than the postcolonial in the sense that decolonization of knowledge and being is a step that is not always clear in postcolonial talks, oriented more to solving problems in the academy than in the world. Gandhi, Fanon, Césaire, Garvey, Du Bois, and Anzaldúa, among others, are clear examples of a decolonial critique pointing toward decolonization. Decolonization of knowledge and being are two particular kinds of de-linking. The question is then to read *Don Quixote* today from the conceptual frame introduced by these thinkers and activists.

To celebrate *Don Quixote* without bringing into the debate, simultaneously, the need to de-link and decolonize knowledge and being would contribute very little to the critical insights and dissenting arguments that Cervantes himself construed through his master narrative. Such mechanisms of power are very well known, and historical examples abound. The case of Patrice Lumumba comes to mind. After the forces of order killed him and chopped his body into pieces, they celebrated him as a national hero of independence. Thus, the first point in re-reading *Don Quixote* is to uncouple the myth and the danger of making the novel a sacred object when *Don Quixote* was written precisely *against* subjectivities formed by sacred beliefs and *for* subjectivities formed by the emancipation of the secular subject, as Immanuel Kant would have it almost two hundred years after *Don Quixote*. *Don Quixote* is one of many expressions of a process in which the sover-



eignty of the subject takes center stage instead of the subjection of the subject to the dictates of God.<sup>6</sup>

To read *Don Quixote* today, and to follow the teaching of Cervantes in writing it (that is, his contribution to the formation of a new European subjectivity—the modern sovereign subject), means to be aware of the particular junction between Cervantes's and the reader's horizon of expectations. When one hundred copies of *Don Quixote* were distributed in the Spanish colonies of the New World, it is easy to guess why Indians and African slaves paid little attention to it.<sup>7</sup> It is also easy to guess that Spanish and Creole elites in their New World colonies ignored this fact because Indians and African slaves were outside the horizon of the civilized expectations of this Castilian elite. This is precisely the moment in which de-linking is required and decolonization of knowledge and of being needs to be put into motion. *Don Quixote* in all its marvelous condensation of several cultural codes of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Europe cannot be taken as a direction and point of arrival for Indians and African slaves. Indians and Afro-slaves have the same right to ignore Cervantes and *Don Quixote* that Cervantes, as well as his contemporary and present readers, have had in ignoring Indians and Africans. A similar argument can be made with respect to Arabic language and the world of Islamic faith both at the time of Cervantes and in subsequent and current interpretations of the novel. At this point, I do not have specific information regarding whether or when *Don Quixote* was translated into Arabic. It should be noted, however, that Arab speakers and Islamic believers had the same right to ignore *Don Quixote* as Cervantes had to ignore the magnificent legacies of Arabic thoughts, in spite of the fact that the original narrator of *Don Quixote's* adventures was Cide Hamete Benengeli.

My re-reading of *Don Quixote* starts, therefore, from the spatial epistemic fracture brought about by the original moment of modernity in which the triumph of Christianity ensures a Western Christian and later a European legacy grounded in Greek and Latin languages and thoughts; that is, from the moment that the foundation of modern/colonial designs in the New World engendered the predictable reaction by those who were not happy to be told what to do. Decolonial thinking, like in Waman Puma de Ayala, is the moment of the epistemic fracture that Western Christianity (and later on, the Civilizing Mission, Development, and Market Democracy) engendered and nourished. The Middle East today is one example of that trajectory. Modernity/colo-



nality is detrimental to the Arabic and Islamic worlds as well as to the languages and religions of indigenous people in the New World and Africa. By de-linking I mean precisely this: to read *Don Quixote* today from the horizon of expectations of individuals and populations for whom literacy and alphabetic writing did not mean what it meant for Europeans (as theorized by Elio Antonio de Nebrija) and for whom the question of authority and the subject in the transition from a Theo- to an Ego-politics of knowledge and understanding (including aesthetics, of course) was not really a problem. In other words, I am not saying that it was bad or wrong to move from a Theo- to an Ego-politics of knowledge and understanding in Europe (as we see it in Cervantes, Bacon, and Descartes). That is what European *men* of the time needed and I have no quarrel with it. What I am questioning is the universality of such a moment of transition and, consequently, the fact that it has been taken as a reference point for global history. Arabic and Islamic people, as well as Indians and Africans, did not have the problem of emancipating themselves from the Theo-politics of knowledge and understanding or working toward an emancipated subject as the foundation of the second stage of “modernity,” grounded in Ego-politics, which then defends and promotes the sovereignty of the subject and the secular concept of reason. Indians and Africans in the New World at the beginning of the seventeenth century were not in need of asserting the sovereignty of the subject and detaching it from the authority of the past. Instead, Indians and Africans needed to decolonize the subject that was colonized under both the Theo-logical and the Ego-logical European foundation of knowledge and understanding. Waman Puma de Ayala introduced a spatial epistemic break and one of the first contributions to the politics of de-linking. But, of course, it was ignored and silenced subsequently, until his manuscript was rediscovered in 1936. I will come back to the issue of the spatial epistemic break as a crucial strategy of de-linking.

Today “we” (and I would suggest that this “we” has some global, not universal, implication that I will soon explain) are facing a critical moment of theoretical and political affirmation of the colonial/modern subject. The colonial/modern subject is not a new one. It can be traced back to the sixteenth century, precisely to the Spanish colonies of the New World. The *colonial subject* (e.g., Indians and Africans “adapting” to the colonial situations created by modernity, as well as the Moors who were victims of the triumph of Christianity in the sixteenth century—and will be colonized by England and France in the nineteenth

century) *was not agonizing* to emancipate from a concept of authority that was linked to Theology and Latin. Ever since the sixteenth century, the modern/colonial subject was learning that it needed to be **liberated** from the domination and supremacy of both the Theological authority and the Ego-logical sovereign subject that Cervantes, Bacon, and Descartes were promoting as **emancipation**.

De-linking not only means to detach oneself from the rules of the game imposed by the hegemony of European Theo- and Ego-logical politics of knowledge/understanding. It also means bringing into existence new and distinct politics of knowledge/understanding. The hegemony of concept and principles of knowledge established in Europe since the Renaissance and through the Enlightenment (in its Theo- and Ego-logical forms as the foundation of European modernity and post-modernity) created the conditions for what in the twentieth century could be formulated as the “Geo-graphic” and “Bio-graphic”<sup>8</sup> politics of knowledge and understanding.

While Theo- and Ego-politics of knowledge have been hegemonic both in their dominance as well as in their internal dissenting dominance—e.g., Marxism that projected a global emancipation based on the model of the European proletariat that emerged with the Industrial Revolution—the Geo- and Bio-graphic politics of knowledge and understanding brought *new rules* into the game, not only *new players*. It created, first of all, the *spatial* epistemic break that cannot be subsumed under the *temporal* epistemological breaks (Foucault), paradigmatic changes (Kuhn), or the emergence of the modern subject (Giddens). Secondly, it introduced epistemic principles tangentially related (because of the expanding logic of coloniality after the conquest and colonization of the New World) to Greek and Latin and more directly related to categories of thought, memories, and social and economic practices of non-European and imperial languages and histories (e.g., Arabic, Aymara, Hindi, Bengali, etc.). Thirdly, it revealed the color of epistemology since Geo- and Body-politics of knowledge were the responses from categories of thought founded in languages and experiences of people of color (Waman Puma, Fanon, Gandhi) and non-hegemonic sexual preferences (Anzaldúa). In other words, the emergence of an epistemology grounded in colonial histories and experiences of people of color and queers revealed that the Theo- and Ego-politics of knowledge were rules established by white European men. Finally, this “newness,” being *spatial*, cannot be subsumed under the ideology of *newness* as a temporal justification of progress and of

modernity as a point of arrival. Thus, it is not by chance that the Geo-politics of knowledge/understanding was articulated as such during the Cold War, and not in Europe but in the periphery—in the Third World by intellectuals of European descent (the case of Borges, but also of Dussel). The Body-politics of knowledge/understanding was articulated as such also during the Cold War, as a growing consciousness among people of color, women, and people of non-hegemonic sexual preferences. In both cases, *the right to know implied the necessary de-linking with the masculine, Christian, and white assumptions that founded the Theo- and Ego-logical politics of knowledge/understanding*. De-linking and decolonization of knowledge go hand in hand. Consequently, reading *Don Quixote* today from the perspective of the Geo- and Bio-graphic politics of knowledge/understanding means to recognize, on the one hand, the enormous importance of the book in the European transition from the Theo- to the Ego-frames of knowledge and subjectivities. On the other hand, it implies the need to reveal the silences and absences of its horizons of expectation in which most of its critics and commentators (including Foucault) were caught.

Waman Puma de Ayala is one of many examples of the emergence of the Geo- and Bio-politics of knowledge but, above all, he is a clear example of de-linking.<sup>9</sup> In contradistinction to Cervantes, Waman Puma and the colonies were not concerned with the transition from the Theo- to the Ego-logical subject. Waman Puma was, literally, in a different place and in a different skin, although at the same global time as Cervantes. Waman Puma did not have to be concerned with the theological and textual authorities that Cervantes so masterfully explains in the preface of *Don Quixote*. Waman Puma was of Cervantes's generation but he was an Indian living in the Viceroyalty of Peru. He was concerned with the transformations of the subjects in the Incanate under colonial rule and with the transformation of subjectivities as a consequence of the colonization of knowledge. The celebration of alphabetic literacy was not in his mind. What he had in mind was the Kipukamayoc [Fig. 1], and how the Kipukamayoc under colonial rule and the colonization of knowledge were transformed into the Kilkaykamayoc. In other words, the Kilkaykamayoc is closer to the paradigm of the literate subject [Fig. 2]. The Kilkaykamayoc has ink, pen, and a table (instead of a set of knotted strings called Kipus) as an extension of its hand [Fig. 3]. The materiality of writing in the transformation of the colonial subject has transformed the Amauta into someone different: a social role between Amauta and Philosopher; that is, between someone



**Figure 1.** The *quipu*, like any other writing system, was a good tool in the hands of the philosophers as well as the accountants for keeping track of goods in the stores of the Inca, the head of Tawantinsuyu. *Kipucamayoc* (or *quipucamayoc*) was the name given to accountants, those who were skillful in the use of the *quipu*. (From Guaman Poma, *Neuva corónica y buen gobierno*, completed circa 1610. Facsimile edition by John Murra and Rolena Adorno, Mexico City: Siglo Vientiuno, 1982.)



**Figure 2.** Albrecht Dürer, *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, 1526, engraving, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire.





**Figure 3.** The *quipucamayoc* became the *quipucamayoc*, since *quipucamayoc* was the name invented in the Quechua language to name the Spanish writing system. In this plate we see the transformation of the *quipucamayoc* into the *quipucamayoc*, a good portrait of what could have been the kind of double consciousness experimented with (in different ways and to different degrees) by the people of the Inca Empire. (From Guamán Poma, *Neuva corónica y buen gobierno*, completed circa 1610. Facsimile edition by John Murra and Rolena Adorno, Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1982.)

whose practice is to “read the signs of the world” [Fig. 4] into someone who “loves wisdom,” according to the Greek tradition translated into European imperial and modern languages. Finally, the imperial colonialization of knowledge/being implanted the very idea of “author” (*el autor camina*) [Fig. 5] into Quechua and Aymara categories of thought. “The *autor camina*” (which is the title of Fig. 5) is a transformation parallel to the transformation of the Kipukamayoc into the Killkaykamayoc. “The author” in this case is no longer the modern-subject (embodied in and by Cervantes) but the colonial-subject (embodied in and by Waman Puma). The colonial subject, that is, the coloniality of being, is the condition from which decolonial thinking emerges; the need to free and clear the coloniality of being. Still in other words, Waman Puma, contrary to the emancipated modern-subject (Cervantes’s subject and author), is a subject twice colonized: in its knowledge and in its being. And this happened, remember, in a world coexisting with Cervantes writing the novel and with the Spanish elites reading *Don Quixote* in the New World, as Irving Leonard registered in his classic study *The Books of the Braves*.<sup>10</sup>

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, readers were from aristocratic stock and wealthy pockets of the population. Leonard reports that in the New World the reading sector of the society preferred bulky novels, poetry, and ecclesiastical literature. The book trade itself was highly profitable in the colonies. Pietistic and theological writings were, of course, the stock and trade for booksellers, although 15% of book shipments were miscellaneous secular works. Who among the publishers in Spain and the New World and the Spanish reader of aristocratic stock would pay attention to what Waman Puma wrote? It was not the fault of Cervantes, of course. Most likely if they had met, one can imagine that Cervantes and Waman Puma could have been buddies, comrades, and teammates.

Waman Puma’s work questions authority in a different epistemic mode than Cervantes. *Nueva corónica* could hardly have been composed by a Spaniard for the simple reason that it would have been a miracle if a Spaniard could have located himself in the place and skin of an Indian who enjoyed both the knowledge and subjectivity of his family and Indian ancestors *and* the subjectivity imposed by Spanish institutions and the Spaniards’ own ancestry. After Waman Puma was widely recognized (thanks to the editions of John Murra and Rolena Adorno as well as that of Franklin Peace), only a conservative Eurocentric mind





**Figure 4.** Guaman Poma’s description of the *astrólogo* (*amauta* or philosopher) in an Inca cosmological setting, with the sun and the moon, the masculine and the feminine, as complementary opposites. He also carries a string of quipus, implement of the Inca writing system, within the same logic of the *ceque* system (Guaman Poma, *Neuva coronica y buen gobierno*). The drawing reveals the coexistence, as in “El Pontifical Mundo,” of Spanish and Inca concepts of representation. This is a good example of what Serge Gruzinski analyzes as “*mestizo thinking*” (*la pensée metisse*). (From Serge Gruzinski, *La pensée metisse*. Paris: Fayard, 1999.)

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# CAMINA EL AVTOR



**Figure 5.** The *astrólogo* (*amauta* or philosopher) has been converted, by colonization, into an author. This plate is captioned “Camina el autor” (the author is walking). While the *amauta* carried quipus in his hands, the author carries a rosary. Furthermore, the author is being followed by a horse, a companion that was unavailable to the *amauta*. (From Guaman Poma, *Neuva coronica y buen govierno*, completed circa 1610. Facsimile edition by John Murra and Rolena Adorno, Mexico City: Siglo Ventiuno, 1982.)

could have come out with the idea that if the *Nueva corónica* deserves attention, then it could not have been composed by an Indian!

Of course, it was not Cervantes's responsibility to be concerned with Waman Puma's situation. It would have been difficult if not impossible for Cervantes to know about Waman Puma. But once again, those who surrounded Cervantes (the Church, the Court, the publishers who were making money with *Don Quixote*) were not interested in the problems that the colonial subjects were facing, since as colonial subjects, they were not considered human, intelligent, or creative enough to be taken into account. *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno* was systematically silenced until 1936, when a scholar discovered the manuscript in the National Library of Copenhagen. However, the Church, the Crown, and the publisher all supported the envoy of hundreds of copies of *Don Quixote* to the colonies. Who was reading the book? It was not the Indians or the African slaves, but the Spanish Creole population and perhaps Mestizos (mixed blood, by pure white epistemology) of Spanish ideological descent.

The clearest example of de-linking and therefore shifting towards a Geo- and Bio-politics of knowledge and understanding appears in Waman Puma's dialogue with the Dominicans (Domingo de Santo Tomas, Las Casas, Vitoria). This is how the strategy works. Waman Puma used Las Casas's critique of the abuse of the Indians by the Spaniards. But, of course, he did not support Las Casas's project of evangelization. At this point, Waman Puma's argument was no longer based on Las Casas's Greek and Latin written tradition and authority, but rather on the oral tradition of Aymara and Quechua. Waman Puma advanced an argument that was both *an alternative to the just war advocated by Ginés de Sepúlveda* and *an alternative to peaceful evangelization advocated by Las Casas*. Waman Puma was able to perform a conceptual de-linking (and set the stage for a future decolonization of being) by de-linking from the tyranny of written Greek and Latin authority and tradition, and by bringing into the game the conceptual framework of the authority and tradition orally inscribed in Aymara and Quechua. De-linking implies border thinking and border epistemology, which is clearly the outcome of Waman Puma's *Nueva corónica*. Thus, while Cervantes was contributing to a chronological epistemic break that Foucault clearly articulated and celebrated, Waman Puma contributed to a spatial epistemic break, to border thinking, and to the decolonization of knowledge and of being, despite the many people who reduced him to silence in their celebration of European achievements.<sup>11</sup>

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Thus, the introduction of the colonies (co-existing *with* but invisible as history *from* the partial European experience) translated into total European abstract universals at the turn of the seventeenth century. This allows us to take a new look at some of the theories of the novel. Lukacs, for example, sees *Don Quixote* as the first great novel of world literature. He links this event to the time of crisis and transition when "the Christian God began to forsake the world," a time of "the demons let loose, a period of great confusion of values in the minds of an as yet unchanged value system. And Cervantes, the faithful Christian and naively loyal patriot, creatively exposed the deepest essence of this demonic problem: the purest heroism is bound to become grotesque; the strongest faith is bound to become madness, when the ways leading to the transcendental home have become impossible."<sup>12</sup> Anthony Cascardi, who distinguished himself for his analysis of the Spanish Golden Age in the frame of European modernity, explores the meaning of secularization in *Don Quixote*. Cascardi links secularization to a transition from the Middle Ages to "modernity." He attempts a re-reading of Lukacs's idealistic language in the *Theory of the Novel* from the materialistic perspective that Lukacs introduced in his *History and Class Consciousness*. Cascardi's thesis is the following:

I follow up Lukacs's lead in arguing that the origins of literary modernity as reflected in Cervantes work may indeed be understood in terms of the process of secularisation, but that we must regard 'secularisation' not just as the result of a change in the patterns of religious belief but as a master-trope for the problem of authority as it is figured within literary history. At the same time I suggest that the process of secularisation is not anything happening in culture external to literature, but that literary history itself, as an effort to negotiate between the authorities of the present and those of the past, is the best example of the 'secularisation' process whose consequences Lukacs is attempting to express.<sup>13</sup>

In both Lukacs's and Cascardi's works, "literary modernity" and "secularization processes and modernity" are considered European phenomena. In this regard, *Don Quixote* would be the secular equivalent (since secularization is conceived as taking place in Europe during the transition from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment) of sacred texts like the *Torah*, the Bible, the *Bhagavad Gita*, *The Book of Changes*, and many others codified and transmitted in oral forms (e.g., Mexican

expression for *la flor y el canto, la tinta negra y la tinta roja*, or many of the African examples studied by missionaries and anthropologists). In this regard, modernity is nothing more than a particular time-space period in which a new concentration of forces took place. However, the problem is that secularization and modernity are much more than simple temporal and spatial markers. They are “keywords” of new forms of life and social organization that became a point of reference and arrival, and that went together with the process of globalization that began in the sixteenth century. This “beginning” of globalization was not, of course, defined by the general tendencies of human beings to use their legs and arms (and their technological extensions, such as tools, to dominate nature, to devastate the enemy in war, or to protect themselves from intemperate climates, etc.) to move around the globe populating it at will. Globalization thus conceived *complements and grounds the hegemony of universal history while it makes invisible global histories that cannot be subsumed under one origin which is at the same time uni-versal*—that is, the belief that there is “one general beginning”<sup>14</sup> and an ascending order toward the final judgment in the Bible, or under the completion of the project of modernity (in the secular version summarized by Habermas). The process of globalization that I am discussing has a different beginning and a different perspective on the beginning: it begins with the emergence of decolonial thinking and it carries the decolonial perspective into the interpretation of global processes. That is to say, it looks at the world from the perspective of global coloniality instead of the perspective of global modernity. It is from this different frame that I am trying to connect *Don Quixote* to global coloniality, and to de-link from the hegemony of a universal history that was and continues to be told from the sacred perspective of the Bible, the secular perspective of Hegel and Marx, and the neoliberal perspective of Huntington and Bhagwati.

Based on Cervantes’s preface to *Don Quixote*, Cascardi rightly underscores the question of authority linked to the process of secularization and to modernity. As is well known, Cervantes made a strong point in rejecting the tyranny and authority of the past. By doing so, he enforced the authority of the individual and of the author. The dialogue with Cervantes’s friend, or alter-ego, reinforces in a parody—cutting links with the past—the servitude to the authority of the past and the freedom of the authority of Cervantes. It reveals the modern subject: “you don’t need me to swear dear that I longed for this book, born out of my own brain.” The first sentence of the prologue is as memorable as the

first sentence of the narrative, "*En un lugar de La Mancha.*" The problem of authority as affirmation of the subject (which has a philosophical formulation thirty years later in Descartes's famous, "I think, therefore I am") thus formulated was strictly a European problem.<sup>15</sup>

Almost one hundred years before Cervantes and Bacon, Spanish chronicler Gonzálo Fernández de Oviedo was confronted with the problem of writing about the "Indies" (*Sumario de la natural y general historia de las Indias*, 1526). Facing a new "reality" that was unknown to and undescribed by the classical authority that Oviedo could read, and oblivious to the fact that this reality was known and described by the people inhabiting the Caribbean and the continent, Oviedo decided to affirm his own authority. In doing so, he disqualified the Greco-Roman authorities on the same ground, but he never thought that the people inhabiting the Caribbean also had their own thoughts about the experience. Oviedo was living as a Spaniard, educated in Italy in the Greco-Latin tradition, and confronting people that he most likely did not consider to be human. Indigenous knowledge in the New World (equivalent to indigenous knowledge in Europe or in Africa) was not recognized. Fernández de Oviedo was contributing to the authority of experience and the sovereignty of the observing subject, not of books and classical authors. He was still under the general frame of the Theopolitics of knowledge, as Jose de Acosta would be about seventy years after Oviedo,<sup>16</sup> but already moving to the Ego-logical principles of knowledge and the shaping of subjectivities.

The major lesson here is that while in Europe the affirmation of the subject was celebrated in an ascending process of emancipation from the Theo-political epistemic frame and toward building the Ego-political frame (to wit, Cervantes's critical reflections on authority and Descartes's critical reflections on thought and subject), in the colonies the new subjectivity consisted not in the *sovereignty of being* but in the *coloniality of being*, in the devaluation and expendability of human lives by expropriating lands, racializing people to exploit their labor (mainly in *encomiendas* and plantations), and depriving them of their own knowledge. The extirpation of idolatry, at its height in the final decades of the sixteenth and early decades of the seventeenth centuries, was the counter-face and hidden side of the Theo-logical authority as well as the Ego-logical affirmation of self. We will have to wait more than 450 years until the consequences of the *coloniality of being* surfaces to the level of *decolonization of being and liberation* similar to the European *emancipation of the sovereignty of being*, to which Cervantes's literary and

Descartes's philosophical reflections contributed. Thus, while celebrating Cervantes's contribution to the European *sovereignty of being*, we cannot be oblivious to two simultaneous historical processes in the colonies. On the one hand, they consisted of the Christian and European (and lately the U.S.) *colonization of beings* by the implementation of global designs under the name of Christian and civilizing missions, development and modernization, market and democracy. On the other hand, they consisted of the dissenting processes of the *decolonization of being* that emerged as the critical consciousness of Indian and African populations in America in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and that re-emerged all over the world with the reproduction of global coloniality enacted by liberal and capitalist imperial countries (England, France, and the U.S.).

The decolonization of being, which had been coming of age in the twentieth century mainly through dispersed work around the world,<sup>17</sup> is the equivalent of Cervantes, Bacon, and Descartes in seventeenth-century Europe. The decolonization of being is the liberation from the dominance of the Eurocentered Theo- and Ego-politics of being and knowledge. It is simultaneously the affirmation of the Geo- and Bio-politics of knowledge and being. Liberation and decolonization mean moving out of the logical and philosophical game to which Cervantes and Descartes contributed so much. For that reason, the meaning of *Don Quixote*, globally and from the perspective of the coloniality of being and colonized subjectivities, is not necessarily a cause for joy and celebration. While no one will question the achievements of Cervantes and Descartes, recognition complements distance and critical change of terrain in the reading of the "masterpieces" of the modern/colonial world. These masterpieces are all, willingly or not, implicated in two simultaneous sets of processes:

- the celebration of the emerging modern subject, the instauration of a supreme Ego-logical frame of mind that displaced (not replaced or erased) the Theo-logical one, and
- the silencing of a newly emerging colonial subject and the devaluation of lives that did not correspond to the dominant Eurocentered values in philosophy and literature. The instauration of the coloniality of being that, almost five hundred years later, follows the example of Cervantes and Descartes by working toward the decolonization of being in the same way that Cervantes and Des-



cartes worked toward the emancipation of the modern subject in the internal history of Europe.

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Most, if not all, readings of *Don Quixote* remained within the Western and Greco-Roman world. The readings that I referenced in my argument are those that linked *Don Quixote* with modernity and with the emergence of the sovereign modern subject. I brought to the foreground the emergence of the decolonial subject in the work of Waman Puma de Ayala in colonial Peru. This underlined the fact that the canonical readings of Cervantes contributed to silencing the spatial epistemic breaks emerging in the colonies, epistemic breaks that consisted of de-linking from the tyranny of Western civilization by proposing to play the game with different rules, and denouncing the incredible credulity of Spaniards and Christians (and subsequently the hegemonic culture of Western Europe and the U.S.) for believing that the sovereignty of the European subject was of universal value and that everybody else on the planet had to bend to the dictates of Western categories of thought.<sup>18</sup>

Globalization could be interpreted and narrated (that is to say, globalization more than an ontological and historical process is an interpretation of socio-historical processes that do not have a name inscribed in themselves) by considering only the local histories of imperial global designs; that is, of what is said, planned, and enacted by persons and institutions that are in a position to enforce their view of life and society. It could also be interpreted and narrated by considering the local histories that bend to imperial forces or decolonial local histories that, like the World Social Forum, propose another globalization. De-linking is perhaps the most radical move and imperative toward an alternative globalization that should be enacted at every level in the sphere of human activity. My argument here consists of a simple example of what de-linking may look like and in what direction it should go in the domain of knowledge and understanding. Anniversaries of masterpieces of genial authors could be maintained if society considers them necessary. At this point, however, they should be read from the perspective of projects oriented toward the decolonization of knowledge and being.

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A final remark: in the dialogue that followed my presentation and during the Roundtable the next day with Mary Gossy and Frederick de Armas, Dean Ahmed I. Samatar presented as a plea to me the need to make clear that not everything is bad in the West and not everything is good in the Rest. Certainly, I cannot agree more. Yet obviously my argument had left the impression that I was condemning the West and glorifying the Rest. My belief in this respect is that there is no safe place. Christianity can be totalitarian and liberating. Liberalism can be totalitarian and liberating. Marxism can be totalitarian and liberating. Islam can be totalitarian and liberating. Being Black or Latino is not a guarantee of being progressive. Being gay or lesbian is not a guarantee of being democratic.

Yet there is a totalitarian and imperial bent in the constitution of the West, and I do not have any doubt about it. That same imperial and totalitarian bent contributed to engendering the same situation in the ex-colonies after liberation. Many African countries are a prime example. In Latin America after the Cold War we have also seen a succession of totalitarian regimes supported by the United States. Saddam Hussein is not the result of totalitarian tendencies in Islam, but of the complicity of colonial with totalitarian regimes in the West (Western liberal and Russian communist imperialisms).

Because there is no safe place, we can think about Samatar's rightly cautionary note in the following terms. While in Europe in 1955, Martinican intellectual and public figure Aimé Césaire observed the striking co-relation between colonialism and Hitler. It would be worthwhile, said Césaire, to study clinically and in detail, step by step, how Hitler "applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the 'coolies' of India and the 'niggers' of Africa."<sup>19</sup>

Not surprisingly, but independently from Césaire, Canan Makiya published in 1989, under the pseudonym of Samir al-Khalil, a book titled *Republic of Fear*.<sup>20</sup> You can imagine both contexts: Césaire writing shortly after WWII and Makiya shortly before the Gulf War. Saddam Hussein had been in power for some time by 1989. Makiya dissected the character of Hussein and concluded that his regime was modelled upon European totalitarian movements: the Nazis, fascists, and communists. The picture is clear. There is a curved line that goes from regimes of violence in the European colonies to regimes of violence in

Europe itself, and back to the Third World, as models for regimes such as Saddam Hussein's. The darker side of modernity is what unites the West with the Rest in regimes of violence. We only hope that decoloniality will bring about lines of peace and liberation, moving back and forth from ex-colonies and beyond to end the imperial complicities between the European Union, the U.S., Japan, and Israel.

De-linking means precisely to de-link from Western totalitarian epistemology and its consequences in the ex-colonies of liberal/Christian and communist imperialism (in spite of Vladimir Lenin who saw imperialism as only linked to capitalism and not to communism). De-linking takes us to decolonial thinking; that is, to a world that can no longer be imagined from within the hegemonic categories of thought that the Renaissance and Enlightenment elevated to a universal credo and which selected Greek and Latin as the only two languages and cosmologies of its foundation. The remaining languages, cosmologies, social and economic organizations, subjectivities, and human interactions were all subjected to the final judgment of Greek and Latin and the six modern European imperial languages. To de-link means to remove oneself from that tyranny and to reinvest in what has been silenced, to make visible what has been rendered invisible, to affirm the presence of what has been declared absent. Categories of thought derived from Greek and Latin and translated into modern European languages are today global. De-linking and the decolonial shift require border thinking: thinking from the spaces that have been rendered silent and absent by the hegemony of Western categories of thought. In this regard, *Don Quixote* will be a good road companion, if we can de-link from the cage in which canonical interpretations have continued to place it. ●

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## Notes

1. Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*. p. 794.
2. Mignolo 1995.
3. <http://umcc.ais.org/~maftab/ip/pdf/bktx/aver-shrt-com.pdf>.
4. My comments here are not directed to Cervantes as a person. He was way above and beyond his time, with wide intercultural experience and a desire and interest to go to Indias Occidentales (which he couldn't). My comments are targeted to uncover the thick layers of assumptions that even Cervantes had difficulty escaping. And they are also addressed to contemporary critics who are blind to the hidden imperial forces that were playing beyond Cervantes as an individual. Another example is Bartolomé de Las Casas. In spite of his good will and strong fights against the conservatives of his time, he proposed (and then corrected himself) transporting African slaves to Indias Occidentales

to alleviate the exploitation of the Indians. In addition, in spite of his passion to defend the Indians, he never asked what indigenous people thought about the situation nor inquired what they were doing to defend themselves. In both cases, there was a whole history unfolding beyond their partial world.

5. The story is reproduced in Richard King's *Orientalism and Religion. Postcolonial Theory, India and "The Mystic East"* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 39.

6. Other later expressions would be René Descartes, "I think, therefore I am," and later on Immanuel Kant, "[E]nlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another." *Kant on History*, edited by Lewis White Beck, translated by L. White Beck, R.E. Anchor, and E.L. Fackenheim (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1963), p. 3.

7. Irving A. Leonard provides detailed information about the distribution of *Don Quixote* in the Spanish viceroyalties of Mexico and Perú in *The Books of the Braves*.

8. The shift from Theo- and Ego-logical to the Geo- and Bio-graphic politics of knowledge underlines two simultaneous shifts. On the one hand, the "graphy" component reinstates the "secondary qualities" that John Locke as well as other Enlightenment philosophers bracketed and considered as an impediment to objective knowledge. On the other hand, it singles out not just the Geo- and Bio-graphy of the modern subject but of the *colonial subject*. And the colonial subject's main feature is that he/she has been racialized. Knowing and understanding comes from the humiliation and inferior status imposed upon the colonial subject by the imperial subject, grounded in the Theo- and Ego-politics of knowledge.

9. I suspect that precisely because of the de-linking aspect of his work, Waman Puma remained silenced, absent, and criticized, while his contemporary in exile, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, was highly praised and celebrated ever since the publication of his book in Spain at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Garcilaso is another example of the emergence of a Geo- and Bio-graphic politics of knowledge and understanding, and therefore of the epistemic difference, although not clearly of de-linking. He plays an important role as "*suplemente*:" writing the chapters that Spanish men of letters were missing, but without questioning the Theo-politics of knowledge and without shifting to the Geo- and Bio-graphic politics as Waman Puma did. It is necessary to point out that Waman Puma reproduced the Spaniards's racist attitude toward Black Africans. (I owe this observation to Catherine Walsh.) Perhaps he learned it from Las Casas, of whom Waman Puma was a serious reader.

10. Leonard reports that due to the fragmentary state of bills of lading from Seville and Cadiz, in addition to maritime disasters, the exact number of copies of *Don Quixote* and their destinations in the New World are unknown. Some records show three copies sent to Cartagena, 262 copies sent to Mexico, and later, 100 more copies to Cartagena. The first record from the *recibo* in Peru lists 72 copies sent in 1605 from Seville by a bookseller in Alcalá de Henares. That year, Waman Puma was in the middle of writing his *Nueva coronica*.

11. Rolena Adorno's *Waman Puma de Ayala: Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru* (1986) remains the turning point in breaking the silence, literally, about Waman Puma. Adorno's argument is clearly stated as a contribution to the decolonization of scholarship (which I will move toward the decolonization of knowledge and of being). The first chapter of the book is a clear example and analysis of Waman Puma's de-linking strategies. Although

Adorno did not use the concept of de-linking, her analysis clearly shows that Waman Puma proposed an alternative to distinct Spanish ideas and projects toward the Indians, and that alternative came from a different foundation of knowledge and understanding, grounded in the oral traditions of Aymara and Quechua languages.

12. Lukacs

13. Cascardi, p. 211.

14. This belief is common and current. It comes to the forefront, for example, in those who argue against same-sex marriages. I remember listening to one woman interviewed in the street who said, "God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve." The argument is vitiated by the faith and belief in only one beginning, that is, one beginning that is at the same time the one and only perspective.

15. At the turn of the seventeenth century, Europe was already benefiting from the Americas, not only in terms of gold and silver, but also in a new mission that started one hundred and some years before Cervantes: massive appropriation of lands, massive exploitation of labor, and racial devaluation of human lives, chiefly Indians and Black Africans.

16. Acosta 1590; Mignolo 2000.

17. On the colonization of being, see Walter D. Mignolo, "Thinking Possible Futures: The Network Society and the Coloniality of Being," The Joan Carlsile Irving Lectures, 1999–2000—*Uphavals: Cultural Aftermath*. Department of Fine Arts, Art History and Theory, University of British Columbia (March 30, 2000); Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," *New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337; and Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "The Topology of Being and the Geopolitics of Knowledge, Modernity, Empire, Coloniality," *City* 8, no. 1 (2004): 29–56.

18. Remember that when I say "West," I mean the Greek and Latin foundations of the imperial languages of European modernity: Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, French, German, and English.

19. Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* [1955], translated by Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review, 2000), p. 36.

20. Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear. The Politics of Modern Iraq*, Revised edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).