

## The Allocation and Relocation of Identities: Colonialism, Nationalism, Transnationalism

The title of this paper brings to mind the image of national cultures and national identities; or as I propose, the “hybrid” and the “transnational” open up the negative space of the “national.” “Hybrid cultures” and “transnational identities” become then part of the oppositional process of relocating cultures and identities in a conflictive dialogue with the colonial allocation of cultures and national allocation of identities. I am assuming that “identities” are not only constructions, but also dialogical constructions that are the same as those inscribed in power structures. The process also demands the uncoupling of cultures and territories that colonial and nation building ideologies so successfully put together. While colonialism allocated identities by distributing, over five centuries, homogeneous cultures across space first (e.g., the distant barbarians), and in a time line later (e.g., the human scale from primitives to European during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, formalized by Hegel’s lesson on the philosophy of history), nationalism operated by linking cultures to territorial delimitation within a space surrounded by frontiers, which at the same time, created the distinctions between the native and the foreigner. “Native” has different meanings whether one considers it within the colonial or the national discourse. In colonial discourse the native is the other, while in national discourse the native is the same.

Colonial and national self-descriptions, during the past 500 hundred years, did not allow room for transnational conceptualizations, even when migrations increased with the emergence of new technologies (e.g., the steamboat and the railroad, in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and the aircraft in the 20<sup>th</sup>). However, means of transportation were just a way to satisfy a desire for “better” (e.g., changing) living conditions, which were increasingly defined in terms of possessions and commodities, the gold of the New World as dreamt of by the Spanish conquistadores. Transnationalism begins to make sense or to acquire a very particular meaning, after the 70’s when economic corporations began to operate beyond the control of the nation state and, by doing so, unwillingly uncoupled cultures from territories. Transnational corporations were and are not particularly concerned with national cultures; capitalism, in other words, is detaching itself from the colonial/imperial and national/territorial discourses. Cultural values are being displaced by market forces, commodities take priority

over national symbols, consumerism and mass-media rather than national values are shaping the new forms of citizenship (Garcia-Canclini 1995). Thus, if hybrid cultures and transnational identities could be located as a research project in different times and places, the 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish emphasis on “purity of blood” and the “unity of language” created the conditions for the description and implementation of a set of values in which the “hybrid” was devalued and the transnational was unthinkable. Colonialism was “transnational” although colonial discourse did not conceptualize the relationships between the metropolis and the colonies as a transnational one. Until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the idea of nation state that began to emerge in the “heart of Europe” (England, France, Germany) was not yet in place. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century on, the idea of the “nation” (be it in Europe where nations were also empires or in the Americas where nations were emerging “independents” from the empire), and of a new social role (the “national citizen”), began to take center stage in building new communities through national identities. Subsumed under the new state allocation; a bureaucratic organization (citizen) was coupled with an imagined community (flag, national anthem, national language, literature and history).

Partha Chatterjee (1993: 228) questioned Charles Taylor’s (1989) characterization of European social thought divided into five distinct ideas that contributed to the production in Europe of the concept of civil society as separated from the state: 1) the medieval idea that society is not identical to its political organization; 2) the Christian idea of the church as an independent society; 3) the development within feudalism of a legal notion of subjective rights; 4) the growth in medieval Europe of relatively independent, self-governing cities; 5) the secular dualism of the medieval policy in which a monarch ruled with the intermittent and uncertain support of a body of states. Chatterjee’s disagreement is laid out on three grounds:

a. It would not be surprising if one finds in the premodern histories of other, non-European countries similar features in state-society relations.

b. It is also difficult to explain why, if European thought is indeed conditioned by these specifics, people from Poland or the Philippines or Nicaragua should appeal to these philosophers from Great Britain, France or Germany to think out and justify what they do to their own societies and states.

c. Chatterjee’s location of the turn around, the moment in which provincial European thought become universal philosophy, and the parochial history of Europe into universal history, is the moment of

capital: "capital that is global in its territorial reach and universal in its conceptual domain. It is the narrative of capital that can turn the violence of mercantilist trade, war, genocide, conquest, and colonialisms into a story of universal progress, development, modernization, and freedom" (Chatterjee 1993: 235).

While I generally agree with this scenario of locating the transition from Europe as one of many civilized centers on the planet to the one that becomes the emblem and the yardstick of civilization, the remaining issue is related to the transition from mercantilism to the Christian universal mission and ambition. The fact remains that the convergence of capitalism with the emergence of a secular nation state, makes it possible to supersede the Christian aim by replacing the conversion of pagans into Christians and vassals of the king by the mission of converting barbarians into civilized citizens, members of the civil society in the new nation-states. In this reconversion something was changed radically: the transnational character of religious communities and membership was transformed into the national character of national communities and their members, the citizens. While the production of Christian identity was one of the main goals of early colonialism, the production of citizen was one of the main goals of the emerging nation states. Religion and race in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, languages and race from the 19<sup>th</sup> century on, still remain major sources of conflict at the intersection of local histories and global designs; between allocation and re(al)location of identities. Globalization and transnational capitalism are creating the condition for the reinscription of religious movements which are constantly reminding us that the subordination of religion to nation was an illusion created and maintained by the powerful ideology of nation building.

In Latin America, however, the notion of *mestizaje*, in the process of nation building replace the Spanish colonial belief in purity of blood. Latin America nation builders maintained, however, the Spanish colonial idea of the unity of language. Thus, while hybridity on the one hand is an attempt to escape the allocation of national identities, *mestizaje* in Latin America is a kind of hybridity that worked the other way around: in post-revolutionary Mexico (1910), "*mestizaje*" became the trademark of the new revolutionary nationalism. In fact, "*Creole patriotism*" in the first hour of decolonization (roughly 1821-1855), turned back to the Indian past to carve a new form of identity, which drifted away from the identity allocation the "*patriots*" had been subjected to under colonial regime. In a way, the independence was the moment in which an underground form of relocation at work during the colonial period became, if not hegemonic, at least dominant; Creole

patriotism relocated the identity of a community under colonial rule, a community that was positioning itself to be the agent of successive identity allocation in the process of nation building. In other words, the process of identification related to power is always twofold, allocation/relocation. By relocating themselves as New Mexicans the new community of nation builders were distinguishing themselves from the *gachupines* of Spanish and European origin and descent. They also established new alliances with the modern European states, and at the same time, took a critical distance from Spain, not only because of its role as a previous colonial power, but also because Spain was losing, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the clout it had in the concert of the European nations in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, the situation had changed drastically. New class configurations and structures of power brought a new ideology and a mestizo nationalism emerged as form of relocating national identities over the legacies of Creole patriotism. While mestizo nationalism built national identity claiming their own will to descend from Aztec peoples, and relocating themselves as New Mexicans, it celebrated racial mix (after the 1910 revolution). Racial mestizaje went together with the repudiation of the diversity of languages spoken in the national territory. This politics of language "also negated the right to the existence of the many ethnic groups that still survived, generally termed Indians" (Turner 1968). In its search for national identity, the mestizo state could not afford to maintain vestiges of pre-Hispanic or colonial society, and the continuing presence of separate cultures within Mexico was living proof of this past. Mestizo nationalism had to domesticate that memory and thus frame their own will to descent in an identity derived from both Spaniards and Indians, which offered them an interesting identity relocation by establishing authenticity on the grounds of hybridity. Mestizo nationalism's relocation of national identities had to re-arrange the role of the Indians in the new order of things. The Indian communities were contradictory to the aspiration of national identity and created conflicts with the modern ideas of equality and the rights of man. To deal with the question of race, mestizo nationalism proposed to change the identification of Indians based on racial configuration, and to replace it by a class kind of identification: "labrador-pobre." Thus, the relocation of national identity embraced the principles of European modernity, of social Darwinism, self-locating mestizo nationalism in the frame of civilization and modernization of the country. The United States remained in the shadows, and was being countered indirectly by the confidence the discourse of mestizo nationalism manifested in

the superiority of European civilization. That was indeed a belief extended throughout Latin America. Things began to change toward 1970, when hybrid cultures were articulated beyond mestizo nationalism, and reframed in the context of transnational identification.

I needed this previous summary to give some grounding to the following considerations, emphasizing colonialism and transnationalism rather than nationalism. I will consider hybrid cultures first. García-Canclini (1989) states that hybrid cultures are basically understood as cultural productions whose final product results in the displacement of existing paradigms. Or, confronting cultural hybrid objects, the reader, observer or consumer, faces an object pointing toward different paradigms. Those paradigms have been constructed in the complicity between modernity and nationalism, and hybrid cultural production (which I prefer to hybrid cultures), are processes searching to transcend or deviate from the control of modern and national paradigms. Among them, the allocation/relocation of national identities, Canclini's concept of hybrid cultures is articulated in the frame of modernity, and his paradigmatic examples of hybridity articulated are consumerism and mass media, mainly in an urban setting. However, he has devoted one chapter of his book (1989) to the kind of hybridity articulated in borderlands. Canclini's case study was Tijuana.

I am bringing this observation to the fore to compare it with the use of the term "hybridity" by Homi Bhabha (1994). I will start with Robert Young's interpretation of Bhabha's hybridity (1995). While for Canclini hybridity is closely connected to modernity, for Bhabha it is linked to colonialism (perhaps one could say coloniality to draw a parallel with modernity). Bhabha, according to Young, describes hybridity as a problematic of colonial representation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal; in such a way that the other denied knowledge enters into the dominant discourse and estranges the basis of authority (Young 1995: 23). Thus, hybridity is located in the production of colonial discourse: colonial discourse produces hybridization and not just the enactment of colonial authority, which represses and reduces native traditions to silence. More recently, Bhabha has attempted to articulate hybridity as a "Third Space," a force enacting political changes, as far as the rearticulation or translation of elements are neither/nor one thing or the other, but a third one. At this point, Young observes, "hybridity begins to become the form of cultural difference itself, the jarring of a differentiated culture whose "hybrid counter-energies" ... challenge the centered, dominant *cultural norms with their unsettling perplexities generated out of their "disjunctive,*

*liminal space.*" Hybridity here becomes a third term which can never in fact be third because, as a monstrous inversion, a mistreated perversion of its progenitors, it exhausts the differences between them" (Young 1995: 23). At this point, I would add that hybridity as displacement of dominant cultural norms in Bhabha is very close to hybridity, as displacement of existing in Canclini. The main differences remain in the fact that for Canclini the main concern is modernity and for Bhabha, coloniality. These differences are clearly due to the particular colonial histories and legacies of British colonialism in India, and Spanish/Portuguese colonialism in Latin America; that is, the nation building process in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Latin America chronologically corresponds to a nationalism within a colonial regime in India. By colonial legacies I mean the interaction in making history of existing communities (in India and Latin America), their particular configuration and their negotiations, survival, and adaptation, resistance under and to colonial rule.

Let me now consider transnational identities and examine three historical moments in which successive migrations were creating transcultural, if not transnational, identities in the modern world: the moment of explorations and settlements where migration was mainly performed by conquistadors and settlers. In this question the identity of the transient people was not so much in question, as the identity of the natives, who had to negotiate their existing way of life with a new societal regime imposed upon them. The feeling of fractured identities began to emerge from the side of the "colonized" in the process of relocating themselves in response to colonial discourse, which was allocating them as savages, cannibals, or, in the best of all possible worlds, less civilized. The second historical moment is the massive migration between 1860 (approximately) and World War I (with more intensity), and until World War II (with less intensity). Migration, at this period, was related to the invention of the steamboat able to carry large contingents of people across the ocean and to the railroad, which began to cross the land not only in Europe, but also in Africa and Asia. While the first migratory movements preceded the modern nation state, the second one was at the core of it. Citizenship and nationality were two frames in which migrants had to deal; citizenship became the main strategy for the control and order of society. National identity was strictly related to citizenship and to education. Trans-national identities were out of the question, since the ultimate frame was the nation: if one was not a citizen of the nation, one was a foreigner. The dividing line was the frontier of the nation, separating not only one country from another, but the citizens from the foreigners.

Transnational identities (migrations, second and third generations of migrant communities) offer the possibility of rethinking (in the academic world) the distinction between citizen and foreigner, and for the agents in these kinds of processes, transnational identities offer the possibility of describing (e.g., identifying) themselves differently, not as people caught between the citizen and the foreigner, but as new situations of transnational identities (cfr. Lisa Lowe's work on Asian immigrants and Asian-Americans, and Wing-Cheung Ng's work on local born descendants in the Chinese diaspora). I will now examine the distinction between civic and ethnic nations. Civic nations are the administrative sphere of the citizen; ethnic nations, the domain of the citizen's cultural configuration. National identities were created by the coupling of these two spheres. Transnational identities (as well as a critical conception of multiculturalism), force us to uncouple them. Separating the civic from the ethnic identities within the nation is the necessary step to break the illusion that citizenship is linked to one national identity, the national identity expressed in national histories and the set of national symbols (flag, national anthem, etc.). National identity was successful in creating the transparent illusion of a civic and ethnic identity, which stands for the emblem of the nation state. To become a citizen of a given nation implies that one has to learn a particular ethnic history as *the* history of the nation. Once again, transnational identities are uncoupling the assumed natural links between citizenship and ethnic belonging and, while are helping to understand and transform the assumed principles in imagining and enforcing the sense of national communities.

I would like to pursue this argument by focusing on transnational social movements (migrations, refugees, and exiles), and intellectual cosmopolitanism:

a. Colonialism and nation building (both in their Western European and neo-colonial versions) shared one fundamental principle; the substantial link between people, language and territory. Thus, the modern idea was that cultures geographically localized were easily converted into an object of study. Orientalism, the emergence of anthropology and more recently of area studies (now being critically examined) functioned under such a principle indirectly revealing the complicity between colonial, national, and epistemic enterprises. After the seventies, however, the massive migration of people from the south to the north and the emergence of transnational social movements that broke away from the ideologically charged nation state, reversed the geo-political and geo-cultural maps. Indigenous transnational movements, for example, are not interested in the national values that

the state attempts to impose on the entire population. Indigenous people, historically marginalized from the civil society in Latin America, are now actively participating in the constitution of a transnational civil society, bypassing the mediation of the nation state and relocating the field of authority in a global civil society, transnational, although with well-defined ethnic loyalties (Varese 1996; Brecher, Brown Childs, and Cutler 1993). The recognition of a transnational indigenous movement articulating local resistance to globalization and creativity toward new forms of democracy, linking local demands for sovereignty with global demands for human and indigenous rights claim – as Varese clearly puts it – produces a change of analytic paradigm and of political praxis. The paradigms we need to change are the paradigm enforced by colonial legacies and modern nation state building and the Enlightenment legacies as a foundation for the modern idea of the citizen as a member of a national (not of a transnational) community. It is necessary, once again, to uncouple the bureaucratic, legal, administrative responsibilities of the citizen from the hegemonic symbolic apparatus of the nation state. In the U.S., for instance, the “will to descent” that David Hollinger explores to account for multiculturalism and criticizes as a viable democratic solution for the future, obscures the fact that his own analysis is also based on a “will to descend” (from the Enlightenment), disguised as a transparent epistemological articulation of his analysis as a national, non-ethnic spirit, in which everyone can find his/her place. In other words, the uncoupling of civil and ethnic identities that migrations and transnational social movements are enacting offers the possibility of rethinking the problem of national multiculturalism from a transnational perspective.

b. Varese’s notion of “indigenous nationalism” is useful here. First because Latin American Indians are in the opposite situation of the contingents of immigrants, both in Latin America (particularly the Southern Cone) and in the U.S. where Amerindians and Native Americans have not been transient; they have stayed put and for five hundred years, they have been second class citizens in the best of all possible worlds. They have not moved toward industrialized countries. Industrialization and globalization have moved *to* them, from the early colonial Christian missionaries to the current marketization of the world, with all the implications for non-urban communities witnessing the increasing “exploitation of nature” in the name of modernization and production. In other words, it is no longer the nation state which is being imposed upon them by the new face of a neo-imperial project, “globalization from above.” Varese suggests that we look at the national

period, particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, from a transnational perspective to understand that the marginalization of indigenous communities was not just a national operation, but a national operation in concert with transnational (e.g., imperial) designs. As a matter of fact, early slavery not only brought to the foreground a necessary rearticulation of labor and race, but it had also been obscured as a transnational phenomena in the name and interest of emerging imperial nations (Spain, Portugal), before the rise of secular, modern, nation states at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Plantations and mines, two of the major sources of colonial economy, were already forms of transnational capital and labor forces producing new forms of identities and identifications (African communities transplanted to the Americas; Amerindian communities that adapted themselves to a new transnational social order), which were indeed simple forms of a more complex network of a global political economy today. The fact that this view of the colonial period in Latin America has not been examined from a transnational perspective is because both the colonial and national histories have always been written from national perspective. To analyze the colonial and national histories of Latin America from a transnational perspective will mean: a) to understand the marginalization of indigenous communities as a result of the enactment of global designs, and b) to comprehend that Amerindian social movements are currently operating beyond the nation state and taking advantage of the economic and technological possibilities offered by the very process of globalization. Amerindian communities are just one example of "globalization from below," which is redefining the sense of "place" that is no longer the nation. Places (or locations in the double sense of geographical and politico-epistemological) are being articulated both as loci of local knowledge and global political action. "Places (or locations) are precisely where new transnational identities are being articulated, where "globalization from below" is giving the rise to the emergence of new ethnicities and new identities" (Hall 1990). Thus, it is now necessary to rewrite the history of indigenous participation in Latin American history from a transnational perspective. Varese reminds us that among the most important political and revolutionary figures in history of Latin America, we find that Tupac Amaru was a wealthy "entrepreneur" linked to transnational business; Juan Santos Atahualpa was a Quechua from Cuzco, trained in Latin and with international political experience. This transnational aspect of indigenous contributions to Latin America history is often cast out, and outshined by the image of isolated and "authentic" Indian communities, which after all are still an invention of cultural anthropology willingly or not

in complicity with imperial design: the allocation of (non-Western) identities through the changing faces of Western expansion (colonialism, imperialism, neo-imperialism). Indigenous resistance, particularly in the Andes and the Amazonas in conflict with transnational corporations (e.g., Ecuatorian Amazonian resistance against 22 transnational oil companies) in complicity and protection of the Ecuatorian State is more and more enacted to turn away from national interests. The defense of local interests is being articulated at the transnational level because of both the transnational corporations invading the territory and the possibility of transnational alliances made possible by the very process of globalization. In other words, new geo-political locations are being redefined at the intersection of local histories and global designs; geo-political locations are produced where globalization from above and from below meets. These new locations (geographical, political, and epistemological) are places where transnational identities are being defined, where colonialist designs for subalternization based on race meet capitalism's designs for the subalternization of the labor market. However, the question of citizenship is still dependent on the state. Would it be possible and thinkable, in Latin America, to imagine a transnational citizenship like that of the European Union? If MERCOSUR and NAFTA are creating the necessary conditions, what will then happen to the old idea of Latin America if Mexicans become citizens of North America?

Let me close this proposal with an invitation to think about cultural hybridity (or hybridity tout court) and citizenship. Which means, first of all, to uncouple hybridity from both the mixtures of genes, blood, race, etc., and from the particularity of an object in which we can recognize, as in surrealist poetry and art, elements of components that we could relate to different cognitive frames or paradigms, whichever terminology you prefer. If we look at hybridity in the context of national identities, ethnic identities and citizenship, and if we could uncouple civil identities (e.g., citizenship) from ethnic or national identities, then hybridity would be located at the level of the latter but not the former: it makes sense to have two or more citizenships (I have two), but it seems to me that it would not make much sense to talk about hybrid citizenship. The legal and bureaucratic system of identification upon which citizenship is materially constructed doesn't allow for hybridity. The problem is that the entire design of nation building ideology successfully constructed a concept of citizenship that was strongly tied to the idea of national identity. And as we all know, it used ethnicity (and of course, language) as a point of contention to let people pass into the sphere of the citizens

who love the national language and culture, and to bar certain people from getting into that well-defined sphere. Now the fact that citizenship was indistinguishable from national identity (and let me insist, it is not clear to me that a mere legal and bureaucratic form of identification shall be necessarily linked to the affect of national symbol), is part and parcel of the current difficulty in dealing with multiculturalism either in the U.S. or Bolivia, even if the two kinds of multiculturalism have a different political, cultural, and economic configuration due to the incongruous local histories and colonial legacies in the U.S. and the Andes.

I will now consider David Hollinger's position on the U.S. multiculturalism (1995, 1996) as a point of reference. Although this is a very different issue, I will risk a summary and a proposal just for the sake of discussion. Hollinger underlines the fact that by the 80's the "most important of the cultures found within the United States were widely understood to be identified by the classic color codes; white, black, red, brown and yellow," which he calls "pentagon." His effort is to disengage "culture" from "identity groups." It is not altogether clear to me what Hollinger understands by "culture," but my guess is that, what he has in mind is "national culture." The question then will be to detach "national cultures" from "ethnic identity." The blind spot (or the trick) is that Hollinger has difficulty in recognizing that national culture is a kind of identity: national identity. Some people would say that national culture is construed. In Hollinger's argument, the phrase is an empty signifier that can accommodate as many ethnic identities as there are under the sun.

Hollinger finds a model for a postethnic society in the natural sciences: "The work of these scholars (Cartwright, Galison, Hecking, Jacob, Fox Keller, etc.) sustains the hope that the knowledge sought by science can still – in this age of historicism – be construed as ideally public, subject to verification by anyone comparably equipped, trained, and positioned" (1995: 113). The parallel between scientific epistemology as a model and citizenship as a practice cannot go unnoticed: both appear as a formidable mechanism for controlling diversity, for homogenizing the population under bureaucratic rules (citizenship) and under epistemic ones (knowledge). This kind of thinking is possible once the ethno-racial pentagon (which is the ethnic classification from the state apparatus) and the ethnic relocation by interested ethnic communities, have been displaced from the center stage and, by doing so, hide the force of colonial legacies that still makes allocation and relocation of ethnic identities a sphere of social conflict and contention. I am not necessarily pushing for a survival of ethnic

identities, and I agree that “the postethnic preference for choice over prescriptions does not carry with it any lack of appreciation for commitments that truly bind ... . Postethnicity reacts not against commitment, but against prescribed affiliations on the basis of descent” (117). The problem is that the will to descend is not only coming from the affirmation of communities which have been allocated in the margins by successive colonialisms, but also hidden under the assumption that affirming post-enlightenment democratic values are not part of “a will to descend:”

Trying to reason with members of other tribes, trying to get them to recognize common interests, and even trying to convince them that they might be better off by adopting our own (?) ways is an ideal easily dismissed ... . Habermas, Jeffrey Stout, and other whose project of building a community through inter-subjective reason would seem aimed exactly at the goal that even Rorty has now acknowledged as his own: the expansion of “our” democratic egalitarian ethnos through immanent critique and the expansion of a “human rights culture” as far as social circumstances will permit it to spread (115).

The will to descend of “ethnic communities” is a subaltern will to descend of a democratic and scientific culture, and it is presented as a “community without ancestors,” unattached to an ethnic community. Thus, the manifesto for a postethnic society seems to me a manifesto in defense of the hegemony of western reason, complicity between knowledge and the state, scientific knowledge and the managerial control of civil society. I am not against a postethnic society. I am very suspicious of the model of a postethnic society presented by Hollinger, where national values are being disguised by an appeal to knowledge and a de-ethnicized society. In other words, a model that hides once again the long-lasting and violent legacies of colonialism, out of which it is difficult to understand multiculturalism. It seems to me that a model for a postethnic society should take seriously into consideration the need for a massive critical examination of colonial legacies. Education will have a fundamental role here, if indeed education could contribute to a massive critique of colonialism and the unmasking of the force of colonial legacies in the present. Nevertheless, we are already witnessing new schools in Europe designed for the children of executives of transnational corporations educated in three languages and with no preferences for national histories. Foreign languages and bilingual education, and national identity become in this scenario, archeological expressions of the old national world order.

Finally, to bring together hybridity and transnational identities, I would like to make a final set of observations beyond the national framework in which Hollinger conceives a postethnic society. When I first read Hollinger's book, I thought it was a good critical examination of the current situation in the U.S. I still hold this opinion. However, the problem is that I was reading it as "their problem," that is, an U.S. problem. Suddenly I realized that as an U.S. citizen since 1984, Hollinger was also talking about *my* problem (and of the 27 million "Hispanics," citizens or not!). Why did I fail to react like that from the first moment, the way I may have reacted if I were reading a similar discussion on Argentina or Bolivia? I remember at that time an anecdote told by Diego Duran, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century: when a Nahuatl informant was asked about his view of the situation in Mexico-Tenochtitlan in recent years, the Nahuatl speaker responded in Spanish, "Estamos nepantla." "Nepantlismo" rather than "hybridity" is the key word that makes sense of the situation I referred to before. I prefer to use nepantlismo when I think about colonial legacies in the Americas, particularly since Chicano/a writers and intellectuals have revived it in the U.S. Nepantlismo is not a mixture, a different version of mestizaje. Nepantlismo is not located in cultural objects, as stated by García-Canclini, but rather in the human situation and in the articulation of a structure of power. The Spaniards were not the ones who "estaban Nepantlas." "Estar nepantla" means to have been and to still be partially something, and having to become something else. That tension between what we are and what we have been and what we have to become is closer to Du Bois "double consciousness" (particularly in the way Gilroy reinterprets it), than to "hybridity" either in Canclini's or Bhabha's way. "Estar nepantla" is a condition of being in subalternity, and being aware that subalternity here means to negotiate the double consciousness between what I had been and what I have to become, although still maintaining (willingly or not) what I had been (a tension that manifests itself in different and particular way in Gloria Anzaldúa, on the one hand, and Richard Rodriguez, on the other). Nepantlismo is not located in discourse, like hybridity in Bajtin and Bhabha, even if in Bhabha the discourse in question is the colonial discourse. Nepantlismo is the kernel of a colonial life/world, the immediate colonial experience of Franz Fanon, and the borderline inscriptions in Gloria Anzaldúa. Briefly, nepantlismo is a way of avoiding the idea of hybridity cultures, where cultures is still conceived as an artifact, an object, and focuses more on the allocation and relocation of identities in the sphere of colonialism and colonial legacies. "Estar nepantla" was not to be in the middle, something in-between, but instead "to be

in front and being in between," and to be in that position in a particular situation: the sphere of Christianity and that of "Aztequidad," to put it somehow. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, this was an ethnic and racial problem already articulated between the three religions of the book (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam). Thus, to "be in front and being in between" summarizes my conception of the allocation and relocation of meaning and of the question of transnational (ethnic, cultural) identities: to be "nepantla" is to be aware of being in-between. A particular kind of in-between, an in-between-ness that, for the 16<sup>th</sup> century, can be described as no longer being what I was or what we were, or as not being yet what we are.

I derive two conclusions from the previous discussion:

1. Nepantlismo is not just a local history; it seems to be the global condition in a transnational world. The experience I call nepantlismo describes neither certain texts nor a certain mode of engagement, but the general activity of living in-between and in front within a subaltern condition. This is why we must consider nepantlismo as neither one kind of experience nor a description of certain valorized texts, but as the general condition of the subjective subaltern experience; in-between something that is being lost and something that is being incorporated, and in front of something that has the sturdy force of hegemonic position. Hegemony and subalternity are being rearticulated in nepantlismo as a complex space of the hegemonic being in conflictive dialogue with the no longer being and the not being yet of subaltern positions. Nepantlismo is the place where local histories and global designs meet; where cultural hybridity and transnational identities can be rethought. However, as far as nepantlismo articulates subaltern perspectives, it becomes not only a political but also a necessary epistemological position to break the complicity between citizenship and scientific epistemology that Hollinger proposes as a viable move towards postethnic societies.

2. In the shaping of the Americas, nepantlismo brings to the foreground the colonial legacies and imperial histories; and also promotes the possibility of thinking comparatively in transnational identities, in which migrations, for example (as well as second and third-generation immigrants in the past thirty years), are creating the conditions to go beyond multiculturalism. This means to surpass nationalism and to understand transnational identities in the context of colonial legacies. Take, for instance, the case of "Latino/a" (and allow me to avoid the discussion of the politics of labeling here). Spanish is no only a foreign language, since "minority language is understood in the context of a national multiculturalism; while 'foreign

language' is understood in a transnational frame." The complexity behind Latino/a in the U.S. is not only that of the diversity within the nation, but of the transnational links in Latino/a America. Nepantlismo complicates the notion of hybrid cultures, at the same time that it rearticulates the relations between hegemony and subalternity at the intersection of local histories and global designs, of the national and transnational, in the conflictive space of hegemonic allocations of being, and the relentless subaltern relocation of no longer being and not being. The final question is whether and how this line of thinking can impinge on education, shaping public opinion, and influencing public policy.

—Walter D. Mignolo  
Duke University

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