(De)colonial Narratives: Rubén Darío, V.S. Naipaul and Simone Schwarz-Bart

Dissertation

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Abstract

This dissertation is located within a comparativist framework, much of which has been termed either post-colonial or de-colonial studies. The study recapitulates Aníbal Quijano’s formulation of the coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge—a concept that presupposes a universalizing paradigm constituted by Eurocentrism, global capitalism and social classification vis-à-vis race—and uses it to trace colonial, anti-colonial and de-colonial thought in the works of Rubén Darío, V.S. Naipaul and Simone Schwarz-Bart. My aims are three-fold: (a) examine (de)colonial responses to the coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge, (b) demonstrate how literature helps explore, understand and further problematize coloniality, and (c) emphasize the transoceanic nature of Latin America and the Caribbean. My principal premise is that literature—as a cultural artifact—is an excellent medium that facilitates the study of coloniality in all of its manifestations. I use Darío, Naipaul and Schwarz-Bart’s respective works to see how they conceptualize and mitigate coloniality, and the results are that each author engages coloniality differently. Darío’s chronicles, essays and letters reveal the poet’s geopolitical preoccupations in light of North American imperialism and the colonial legacy of Europe. The works show divided, if not contradictory, positions that the writer holds in relation to coloniality. A selection of Naipaul’s novels permits an extended look into the fundamental role that naming and inscription played in
establishing coloniality. For the most part, Naipaul’s works reiterate colonial discourses that continue to marginalize and disqualify non-European subjectivities and geographies. In relation to Schwarz-Bart’s novels, examining the concepts of gender, life, death and relationality reveals traces of a de-colonial framework. Nonetheless, in her works, I argue that colonial discourses still linger in the form of (anti-)coloniality. In each instance, the authors’ works become pedagogical tools that, in the large scope, lay the foundation for de-colonial worlds. Ultimately, I claim that a transoceanic comparison of subaltern intellectual and cultural responses to colonization, Westernization and coloniality help us promote alternative epistemologies, expose Eurocentric geopolitical divisions and generate epistemological democratization where one region or group of people is not considered superior over others. Using literature to test Quijano’s concept not only reminds us of coloniality’s power and influence in the world we live in today, it also helps us deconstruct said concept.
To Brooke
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Introduction

Sitting down to reflect about what I have written over the past year, I note the journey on which this dissertation has taken me. To borrow the maritime metaphors of Guadeloupean author Simone Schwarz-Bart, my craft has been righted many times during the voyage, and, each time, for the better. From my awkward, confusing prose to the topic of this dissertation itself, I am indebted to those who have helped take control of my own craft. The trip has taken some unexpected turns, but, again, it has been for the better.

Over a year ago, I had the idea of writing a dissertation that examined issues of citizenship, democracy, capitalism and subjectivity all within a (de)colonial framework. My plan was to take a transoceanic approach to compare Latin American theorists’ works with theorists’ works from outside the region. I wrote a prospectus that set out with such goals. Naively, I thought I could chart all the oceans at once; as helmsman of my canoe, I thought it naval vessel. In that proposal, I would use Aníbal Quijano, Walter Mignolo, Ileana Rodríguez, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Enrique Dussel, W.E.B. Du Bois, Gloria Anzaldúa, Rigoberta Menchú, Yukio Mishima, Chinua Achebe, Néstor García Canclini, Antonio Cornejo Polar, Ángel Rama, Édouard Glissant, Franz Fanon, Aimé Cesairé, Partha Chatterjee, Roberto Schwarz, Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan, Norbert Lechner, Seyla Benhabib, Saskia Sassen and Claude Ake.
Looking at all the names now, I wonder what I was thinking then. To express it politely, we might say I had illusions of grandeur. Fortunately, my committee was very gracious with me, and their advice was indispensable. Writing a dissertation with the one I had proposed was like trying to travel from Argentina to Chile on Magellan’s ship. It was possible, but such project was not feasible in a year, much less a decade. What I was proposing was a research project that would last a career. Thus, I followed the recommendation of my committee: examine the articulations between literature and coloniality. Their advice has made the trip a pleasant, productive one and engendered in me a stronger appreciation for literature and writing itself. This research project still keeps intact the transoceanic connections that I proposed in the initial proposal.

In my studies I have found Aníbal Quijano’s work on the coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge as one of the most comprehensive, developed arguments that addresses inequality, exploitation, racism, discrimination and hierarchy over the past 500 years. For these problems, he holds responsible a tripartite colonial/modern system that includes capitalism, Eurocentrism and social classification. Such an argument has proved to be a contentious one, and, as I recently discussed with Catherine Walsh, the simple mention of the term ‘coloniality’ or its counterpart ‘de-coloniality’ can give way to a shouting match in academic conferences. Talking about coloniality means talking about the dark side of Western society, as the title of Walter Mignolo’s recently published work underscores. Thus, this dissertation is political in nature not only because coloniality is a polemical topic, but also because literature is political in nature; we just don’t always recognize that.
What each chapter tries to capture are the manners in which writers in Latin America and the Caribbean grapple with coloniality. In basic terms, coloniality refers to the social, political and cultural colonial paradigms that survive colonialism’s end. Despite the latter’s death, the former continues on living, configuring and constituting local populations and geographies; colonialism’s imprint remains. Take José Enrique Rodó, for example. Today, his essay *Ariel* is included in many Master’s reading lists in Spanish departments in North America. In his work, he criticizes the United States and its ‘big stick’ policies at the turn of the 20th century. To construct his argument, he uses William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. He likens the United States to Caliban while, at the same time, argues that Latin America should be in the likeness of Ariel. A superficial glance at his use of Shakespeare might peak our curiosity, but when we ruminate over Rodó’s decision, we begin to wonder why he uses a European author from the 17th century to describe Latin America. In other words, Rodó looks to Europe to understand his reality. Such gazes, such thoughts are the legacies of coloniality.

We can begin to explore how coloniality inscribes Latin America and the Caribbean by examining how writers from these regions engage with it. In this dissertation, I examine the works of Rubén Darío, V.S. Naipaul and Schwarz-Bart to see how their works accept, reject and/or problematize the coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge. I chose these writers because one of my aims was to underline the transoceanic connections these authors have. In each case, we come across different responses. I want to stress that my main objective is not to determine if each writer is colonial or not. If I spent my energy trying to label each author either ‘colonial’ or ‘de-
colonial,’ I myself would be caught in the trap of coloniality, for the naming and inscription was one of the most powerful tools of the colonizers; Catherine Walsh kindly reminded me of this fact. Consequently, I use each author’s works and interviews to examine the narratives and discourses they choose to emit from their varied loci of enunciation. Each writer is unique in his or her engagement with coloniality, and, as we will see, their works and they themselves are caught between colonial, (anti)colonial and de-colonial paradigms.

Despite the difference in the author’s responses, there are two characteristics that stand out among all three. First, the writers’ works are lyrical in nature. They have such a craft with words that their works cannot not only be appreciated for their content but also for their form. This may not be surprising given what we might already know about these authors; however, we might consider the musicality and poetic nature of their works as a response to coloniality itself. It was not until the end of writing this dissertation that my advisor made me aware of the lyricism impregnated throughout the narratives. Even Rubén Darío’s essays are ripe with syntactical symphonies. In the future, I would like to return to this topic and develop a (de)colonial reading of the writer’s lyrical qualities, for we might argue that each author plays with orality, musicality and narrative to construct a cacophony of words and worlds.

In some cases, I have attempted to capture the lyricism of each author in each chapter’s epigraphs or examples. What is noteworthy about these passages is that they still address coloniality in some manner yet do so with lyrical prose. For example, in his criticism of North American imperialism, Darío closes his essay “El triunfo de Calibán”
with this: “Miranda will always prefer Ariel; Miranda is the grace of the spirit; all the mountains of stone, of iron, of gold and of bacon, will not be enough for my Latin soul to prostitute itself to Caliban” (Escritos inéditos 162). Schwarz-Bart is equally as eloquent. In the first epigraph of chapter four, I chose a passage from Schwarz-Bart’s Between Two Worlds that reveals the consequences of Eurocentrism in relation to the community’s beliefs. She writes: “According to them, people turned into dogs and crabs as naturally as water turned into ice, or as electricity was changed into lights in lamps or into words and music on the radio. In their view Ma Justina was just a little slice of life which wasn’t mentioned in books because the white men had decided to draw a veil over it” (Schwarz-Bart, Between 25). And in Naipaul’s case, his narrator, Salim, in A Bend in the River laments the power of narrative: “I began to think I wanted to be a child again, to forget books and everything connected with books” (Naipaul, A Bend 272). Such lyricism should not go ignored, and thus, accordingly, if I were to revise this dissertation for publication, I would place equal emphasis on the lyrical as on coloniality in the construction of my argument; I would avoid unnecessary repetitions of terms and plants anti-coloniality, de-coloniality and coloniality through the articulation of the lyrical. But as it is, finding the colonial articulation through the texts has been accomplished.

Second, each author’s positionality underscores the transoceanic qualities of Latin America and the Caribbean. Since the inception of Latin American literary studies in the second-half of the 20th century, scholars have dedicated much time and effort to mapping, understanding and theorizing about Latin American literatures and cultures. Generally, the studies have been limited to the region where Spanish inscribed the lands and
peoples. Nations in the Caribbean whose tongue is other than Spanish have remained, for the most part, outside of Spanish and Portuguese departments. How to understand the Caribbean in relation to Latin American studies has been a contentious topic, as Ileana Rodríguez pointed out quite a long time ago in her essay “La literatura del Caribe: Una perspectiva unitaria.” She argues that Caribbean studies should not be excluded from studies of Latin America. For her, “[t]he concrete attempts of labor, combined with a clear conception of the area and knowledge of literary production the same area, express the necessity of integrating these Arts with continental production” (Rodríguez, “literatura” 13; my translation). It seems that, based on recent and past scholarly production, limiting the scope of Latin American literary and cultural studies to the Spanish language no longer reflects the socio-cultural, political and geopolitical realities of Latin America; the region is not cut off from the rest of the world. In fact, as Quijano and Wallerstein will point out in their essay “Americanity as a concept, or the Americas in the modern world-system,” the region has held a fundamental role in the world-system for the past five centuries. “The creation of this geosocial entity, the Americas, was the constitutive act of the modern world-system. The Americas were not incorporated into an already existing capitalist world-economy. There could not have been a capitalist world-economy without the Americas” (Quijano and Wallerstein 549).

In Spanish and Portuguese departments around the world, scholars continue broadening their research scopes to include the global, heterogeneous nature of Latin America. For example, studies of indigenous culture—non-Spanish speaking individuals—have arisen, especially in the de-colonial movement and many indigenous
scholars are part of the discussion of what the Americas mean. Now, for example, Quechua and/or Andean studies are appearing in Spanish and Portuguese departments in the United States. Other instances include research on the transoceanic flows of people, goods and ideas in Latin America. Scholars have continued exploring transatlantic relations between Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America and have begun to open the field of research to include transpacific links between Latin America, China, Japan, the Philippines and India. Not only do these studies challenge the current titles and organization of university departments based on language, they also begin to deconstruct and recognize the influence and power that Europe has had in shaping academia and research agendas themselves. Let’s not forget that the term ‘Latin America’ itself is a European invention dating back to the middle of the 19th century, as James Dunkerley underscores in his essay “Latin America since independence.”

Over the last two hundred years there have been continuous debates over the origins, development, identity and future of Latin America. Indeed, this term is itself a Parisian concoction of the 1860s that sought to bestow a terminological unity upon a region that seemed to lack cultural, political, economic and even geographical coherence, particularly to outsiders and especially to Anglo-Americans. (Dunkerley 28)

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I organized my dissertation based on how Dario, Naipaul and Schwarz-Bart’s lives and works represent the transoceanic nature of Latin America and the Caribbean. Dario’s life and works underline the following transoceanic network: Nicaragua—
Chile—Argentina—France—Spain; Naipaul’s life and works underscore the relationship: Caribbean—Africa—India—Europe—South America; and finally, Schwarz-Bart’s works highlight the following axis: Guadeloupe—West Africa—France. Each author’s birthplace—Nicaragua, Trinidad and Guadeloupe—were at one time colonies of Spain, England and France. In fact, Guadeloupe continues to be a department of the French Republic. Similarly, regions in Africa, India and Latin America were European colonies. What the common denominator is among all these places are colonialism and coloniality. Either within the empire or in the colony, European and non-European subjects have had to address capitalism, Eurocentrism and social classification vis-à-vis race. Hence, it is hard to separate my work’s transoceanic scope from coloniality, because it was and still is coloniality and colonialism that have established and upheld the transoceanic flows of peoples, commodities and ideas.

As a result, my research project is located within this emerging trend of comparativist framework, much of which has been termed either post-colonial studies or de-colonial studies. My objectives in the subsequent chapters are to (1) examine (de)colonial responses to the coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge, (2) demonstrate how literature helps us explore, understand and further problematize coloniality and (3) draw attention to the transoceanic nature of Latin America and the Caribbean.

With regards to my first objective—examining responses to coloniality—we can take each of the authors’ respective works and dialogue them with Quijano’s formulation. In each particular work, we find responses to Eurocentrism, capitalism and social
classification. In some cases, the responses may be iterations of colonial discourse, its rejection or its debasement. For example, as we will later see, Naipaul’s works often appropriate and replicate colonial discourses, that is, his works understand the world from a Eurocentric framework whereas Dario’s work might be better understood as (anti)colonial. He reiterates tenets of coloniality like Eurocentrism, capitalism and social classification but in other cases rejects them using the same colonial paradigm. The first aim leads me to my second.

Literature as cultural artifacts permits the exploration of coloniality. While most of the literature I examine in the subsequent chapters is fiction, they are not void of social, historical and cultural contexts. Schwarz-Bart’s writing interpolates Guadeloupe and Africa while Naipaul’s works revolve around the colonial and post-colonial periods of Africa, the Caribbean and India. Much of what I analyze can be read in and outside of literature. Take my example of disposable life in Naipaul’s travel narrative. The distinction ‘migrant/traveler’ becomes the difference between disposable and human life, between colonized and colonizer and between center and periphery. The question of disposable and bare life is one that continues to be relevant today.

My third objective—highlighting the transoceanic nature of Latin America and the Caribbean—becomes evident through the authorial voices, their own migrations and the characters’ displacements in their literary works. Migration, displacement and travel mark each author’s experience. If we were to mark on a map each one of the places represented by the authors—either in their texts or their homes—each continent (save Antarctica) would be accounted for. Hence, it is my goal to highlight the transcontinental
flows of peoples and knowledge between Latin America, the Caribbean and the rest of the world.

My principal argument, though, is that literature—as a cultural artifact—is an excellent medium through which we can approximate ourselves to the study of colonially in all of its manifestations. Through each author, we will see how they conceptualize and mitigate coloniality; therefore, in each instance, their works become pedagogical tools that, in the large scope, lay the foundation for de-colonial worlds. Ultimately, I claim that a transoceanic comparison of subaltern intellectual and cultural responses to colonization, Westernization and coloniality help us promote alternative epistemologies, expose Eurocentric geopolitical divisions and generate epistemological democratization where one region or group of people is not considered superior over others.

In all the chapters, I interweave de-colonial arguments within the colonial ones. By this I mean that I use Quijano’s work as a foundation and then interweave recent publications regarding coloniality’s undoing. This vein of research has been termed ‘de-colonial studies,’ and, at this moment, much de-colonial research is currently being conducted. While this dissertation has been written at the same time as the publication of ‘de-colonial’ works, we might consider my work as an antecedent to such research, for I ground my argument in Quijano’s concept. Nonetheless, my fourth chapter begins to address de-colonial thought, figures and paradigms in more detail. In the first chapter, I recapitulate Quijano’s formulation of the colonially of power and the coloniality of knowledge, intervening with examples and my own understanding of his term. As I have
already mentioned here in the introduction, the concept presupposes a universalizing paradigm constituted by Eurocentrism, global capitalism and social classification vis-à-vis race.

These concepts are not new, and neither are the criticisms of each. As I was researching the following chapters, I came across many of the same critiques and arguments in works that were published nearly the same time of Quijano’s initial work without mention of him, like Indira Karamcheti’s, Wimal Dissanayake’s and Carmen Wickramagamage’s, for example. Nonetheless, what is novel in his formulation is his ability to note the interrelationships between each domain. For him, we cannot think about capitalism without thinking about Eurocentrism, and we cannot think about capitalism and Eurocentrism without thinking about social classification and colonialism. All three domains are incredibly intertwined and interdependent. Beginning with the supposition that Latin America possibilatted the current configuration of global power, he explains in a rather seemingly succinct yet complex manner the cogs and gears of coloniality.

The second chapter territorializes Quijano’s theoretical formulation, examining a series of Rubén Darío’s chronicles, essays, newspaper articles and letters. The chapter begins by maintaining that Darío’s works are political in nature. Through a series of texts, I examine Darío’s locus of enunciation and the manner in which he engages Eurocentrism. In other words, my objective is to ascertain if Darío demonstrates Eurocentric thinking, as many critics have argued. For the most part, my argument is that Darío’s thought is Eurocentric. Nevertheless, I claim that such a conclusion does not
fully represent Dario’s subjectivity. Rather, Dario’s chronicles, essays, newspaper articles and letters present a non-European subject whose positionality becomes disoriented, especially faced with imperial capitalism from the North and marginalization from the East. Put simply, Dario’s texts reveal a subject with a fractured, or divided, consciousness—a consciousness that, on one hand, reproduces Eurocentrism and, on the other, questions the same paradigm.

To support my argument, I use the geopolitical divisions ‘East/West’ and ‘North/South,’ because, in Dario’s texts, we see a clear geopolitical preoccupation on the part of our author. The problem for Dario, though, is how to understand these divisions. He oscillates between Europe and North America’s rejection or its admiration. Take for example, his essay “El triunfo de Caliban,” he criticizes the United States, calling it Caliban. In his essay he realizes that the imperialistic motives of the United States’ endangers the current political, social and cultural constellations in Latin America. His argument is ultimately that he cannot be in favor of the United States.

In the same essay he argues that Latin America should unify with the European countries that share the same linguistic heritage to counter the North’s intentions. In this particular case, Dario identifies with Europe, seeking it out for help. Nevertheless, he rejects Europe in other cases. He laments that no one in Europe reads Latin American authors and criticizes Latin America for letting Europe control Latin American literary production given his continent’s lack of publishing houses. For the most part, Dario’s arguments still remain with colonality. They may be anti-colonial in nature, because he tries to debase coloniality using the same logic. In other words, he tries to turn
coloniality on its head, inverting the same dichotomies that the West used to discredit and relegate non-European territories and populations.

In the final section of the chapter, I look at a series of de-colonial thoughts that present themselves in Darío’s texts. For example, through his writings, we see an evolution in his thought on race. In one case, in his essay “La raza de Cham,” he appears to affirm racist discourses based on social classification. Yet, later on in life, he publishes another article “El talento de los negros” where he rejects notions of inferiority based on race. He uses the article to name the achievements of people of color. Not only does he critique racism, he also challenges the political constellation of the nation and war. Through a series of chronicles and essays, we can identify lines of thought that break with coloniality. Thus, in this sense, my chapter reveals the difficulty of thinking from outside the center when coloniality permeates and constitutes local political, pedagogical, social, cultural and economic paradigms.

Chapter three explores Naipaul’s interpolation with colonial thought, and like Darío, his self-professed allegedly apolitical nature is source for controversy. The West Indian author has had a prolific literary career that has spanned for more than four decades, and his works often revolve around the so-called periphery during some point of colonialism or post-colonialism. For instance, his novels are set in India, Africa, the Caribbean and South America; in two instances, he has broken with such a tradition, opting to write about the American South and England. His corpus of works includes many similar themes: rootlessness, colonialism, darkness, pessimism and imperfection. Almost always, he saves the imperfect for the non-European subject.
If I claimed that we can see contradictory lines of thought in Dario, for me, we find a stronger adherence to Eurocentric constellations and thinking in Naipaul’s works. I claim that Naipaul expresses a contradictory position inside and outside of the empire; his gaze is colonizing and imperial, yet the gaze itself emerges from a colonized subject. His works reproduce coloniality from a Eurocentric viewpoint. When analyzing his works *The Middle Passage, A Bend in the River* and *Half a Life*, we come across unflattering pictures of non-Western regions and subjectivities. I take up several topics in particular to make my argument—all of them revolve around (dis)order. Part of my objective in this chapter is to highlight how ordering and naming become part of the colonial/modern project. It is the ordering and (re)naming of geographies and subjectivities that create colonial difference, or more globally, the coloniality of power/knowledge. Naipaul’s narrative illustrates the power that narrative as a tool of inscription and naming has in establishing coloniality.

The manners in which he orders the non-European world include the negative representations of the land and peoples, the inability of peaceful, orderly self-government outside of the West and industrialization and Westernization of non-Western countries. I use *A Bend in the River* to argue that Naipaul is complicit with the Eurocentric myth that Europe is the pinnacle of the world. This myth emerges in the way Naipaul’s narrator describes an unnamed country in colonial and post-colonial Africa. While there are many examples, perhaps the most salient and brief one is the representation of the colony’s independence. As a colony, the town in which the narrator lives goes through a period of modernization and serves as an important economic outpost in Africa’s interior. As the
colonial bonds are broken, the town falls into a state of decay. Violence emerges, Western subjects flee and chaos erupts. The rejection of the West means a plunge into disorder; it reads that the newly independent country is unable to govern itself.

His other works, *The Middle Passage* and *Half a Life*, depict non-European subjects in an unfavorable manner. In some cases, they are fractured, uncivilized, displaced subjects doomed to travel the world without calling a particular place home. Take, for example, *Half a Life*’s main character, Willie Chandran. Offspring of an illegitimate relationship in India, he flees the country to live in London and then Mozambique where he tries to settle. He can never feel quite at home in each place, and he cannot move beyond what he believes is his second-class status.

Each novel reproduces some of the same colonial/imperial constructs used to disqualify non-European subjectivities and territories within the colonial complex of power. Hence, while the reader may be distracted by the author’s exceptional ability to tell a story, what lurks beneath that are some of the same colonizing methods that Quijano identifies in his formulations.

The fourth chapter examines the traces of the coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge in Schwarz-Bart’s novels. I use her novels *The Bridge of Beyond* and *Between Two Worlds* to problematize coloniality and its variants: de-coloniality and anti-coloniality. Ultimately, I argue that her works demonstrate a de-colonial framework; yet, there are still anti-colonial (or what I would argue still is colonial) traces within the novels. To make my argument, I look at the concepts of gender, life, death and relationality. In each case, I argue that the novels present
alternative knowledges and understandings of the world that ultimately deconstruct coloniality. These alternatives include different conceptions of life, death, religion and martial unions. In this sense, we might claim that her works depart from what I call the coloniality of religion and the coloniality of death.

I use María Lugones’ work on the coloniality of gender and the modern/colonial system of gender as the theoretical framework to explore Schwarz-Bart’s approximation to gender. There has been much criticism written about gender and her novels, but none so far that addresses the coloniality of gender in particular. As a woman writer, she breaks a longstanding colonial relationship between masculinity and narrative. Even more, her first novel *The Bridge of Beyond* revolves around a family of matriarchs told from the perspective of the youngest member. Yet, I cannot say that her dealing with gender is completely de-colonial; it might be better described as anti-colonial in some aspects. For example, her emphasis on the relationship between corporality and gender still follows the Western conception of gender.

In the subsequent section, I explore the representation of alternative unions in *Between Two Worlds*. While living in Africa, the main character, Ti Jean, marries a woman from the Ba’Sonanke tribe. However, the marriage grows to include several more wives. Schwarz-Bart’s inclusion of polygamy in her novel highlights a cultural practice in West Africa that challenges Western conceptions of monogamy. Schwarz-Bart’s representation does not relegate or negate the practice as we often see done in colonial practices; rather, her simple act of inclusion without prejudice begins to lay a de-colonial framework of thought.
The manner in which she depicts life and death in novel questions dominant Western understandings of both. As Maria T. Smith argues, her novels contain strong Vodun elements. Again, the religion is presented without discrimination, and, in fact, it is the logic by which many of the characters view the world, particularly the worlds of life and death. One particular articulation of both, the zombie, not only highlights alternative conceptions but also marks the legacy of slavery in the Caribbean, as slaves were reduced to the ‘living dead’ on the plantation. The zombie, thus, serves a double articulation. On one hand, the figure highlights the (de)coloniality of religion and, on the other, remembers the colonial legacy of slavery.

In all of these instances, coloniality interpolates each narrative in some way, whether colonially, anti-colonially or de-colonially. Let’s remember that coloniality is a narrative itself. Using literature to test Quijano’s concept not only reminds us of coloniality’s power and influence in the world we live in today, it also helps us deconstruct said concept and begin to imagine de-colonial worlds.
Chapter 1

Unraveling the Colonial/Modern: What Is the Coloniality of Power/Knowledge?

Almost at the end of my graduate education, during my third year, in a class offered by Professor Juan Zevallos Aguilar, I read Aníbal Quijano for the first time. The piece I read was “Colonialidad del Poder y clasificación social.” I was very content with this article because it tied together the relationship between capitalism and race in Latin America. During my fourth year as a graduate student, I took a course on Transatlantic Studies with Professor Ileana Rodríguez and we read a book titled Estudios Transatlánticos: Narrativas Comando/Sistemas Mundos: Colonialidad/Modernidad. In Professor Abril Trigo’s class I had studied Modernity and Coloniality, but it was not until I took the course on Transatlantic Studies and read the book Rodríguez edited with Josebe Martínez that I became familiar with the connection between the two concepts—coloniality/modernity. From that time on, in my mind, coloniality and modernity were together. In this chapter, I will recapitulate the arguments that Quijano offers on the coloniality/modernity of power and knowledge; although, he sometimes writes this duality as ‘coloniality of power’ and as the ‘coloniality of knowledge’ alone. I address the coloniality/modernity of power/knowledge by examining how the world was divided along two axes, one being ‘North/South’ and the other being ‘East/West.’ While the coloniality/modernity of power/knowledge is fundamental in understanding geopolitical
divisions, we must consider that it was the capitalist system that drove and arranged the geopolitical configurations during coloniality/modernity.²

The coloniality/modernity of power is a very complex term that implies a highly heterogeneous process in which multiple axes and domains consolidate to form a global power. Actually, Quijano uses several terms to refer to this constellation of power. For instance, he often refers to the colonial nature of power and to the global coloniality of power—terms I find are manageable. Therefore, something akin to the term coloniality of power is his definition of globalization that reads as follows:

What is termed globalization is the culmination of a process that began with the constitution of the America and a colonial/modern Eurocentered capitalism as a new global power. One of the fundamental axes of this model of power is the social classification of the world’s population around the idea of race, a mental construction that expresses the basic experience of colonial domination and pervades the more important dimensions of global power, including its specific rationality: Eurocentrism. The racial axis has a colonial origin and character, but it has proven to be more durable and stable than the colonialism in whose matrix it was established. Therefore the model of power that is global hegemonic today presupposes an element of coloniality. (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 533)

In another article “Colonialidad del poder y clasificación social,” Quijano states that
With the constitution of (Latin) America, in the same historical moment and movement, the emergent capitalist power becomes worldwide, its hegemonic centers are located in the zones situated over the Atlantic—that after will be identified as Europe—and as central axes of its new standard of domination coloniality and modernity are established also. In sum, with (Latin) America capitalism becomes worldwide, Eurocentric and coloniality and modernity are instituted, associated as the constitutive axes of its specific pattern of power, until today. (Quijano, “Colonialidad del poder y clasificación social” 342)

Coloniality of power is thus an extremely complex model that implies heterogeneous articulations between race, labor, global capitalism, America, Eurocentrism, coloniality/modernity and power/knowledge. In the rest of the chapter, I will examine the complexity of the interrelations between all and each of the concepts that constitute a new system of thought expressed through an awkward formulation overwhelmed by slashes.

**Eurocentrism**

Let’s begin with Quijano’s concept of Eurocentrism, relying principally on what he says in his article “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America.” Eurocentrism refers, first of all, to the systematization of knowledge that originates in Western Europe beginning in the 17th century (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power 549). Eurocentrism basically consists in privileging everything European. How did Europeans
manage to position themselves in this situation? Quijano tells us that they draw on a series of concepts. These concepts are dualism, naturalization of difference, evolutionism and temporal and spatial distortion. Subsequently they organized these concepts into a system with a logic that underlies a discriminatory base to assert its dominance. If we single out one of these concepts, say dualism, it refers to the dichotomies that established differences upon which inequality will rest. When Quijano defines dualism, he makes reference to four prevalent and symptomatic dichotomies: European/non-European, civilized/primitive, modern/traditional, capitalist/pre-capitalist (“Coloniality of Power” 552). Here we can observe how Quijano’s system of thought is multiply articulated, a fact that accounts for the repetitions that constitute the essential nature of his style. Nonetheless, he concludes that all these concepts and the logic that sustained them established a hierarchical system in which Europe is at the pinnacle, and hence superior. That is the essence of Eurocentrism, a logic that enabled Europeans to conclude “that they were naturally (i.e., racially) superior to the rest of the world . . .” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 552). In the same quote, Quijano asserts that being naturally superior meant their capacity to conquer and dominate the rest of the world, an assertion that takes us directly to Quijano’s positioning of race in his own system. I will analyze race below. But before, let’s focus on Eurocentrism as the naturalization of dualism as difference³ (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 549-553).

Naturalization of difference has two steps. The first step consists in relegating non-white subjects to the domain of nature; the second, in naturalizing this relegation (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 555-556). Naturalization of non-white subjects
somehow subtends the perception of difference. This difference will become the basis of the concept of race, which underlies social classification. Quijano subsequently will go as far as to argue that race was a nonexistent concept before the encounter of the American continent (“Coloniality of Power” 534). Although in a footnote in “The Colonial Nature of Power and Latin America’s Cultural Experience,” he nuances the assertion by writing that race was probably a concept with currency in the Iberian Peninsula since the expulsion of the Moors. Whatever the subtleties, race seems to be dated to the 15th century and related to the conquest of America and re-conquest of the peninsula.

The systematization of race becomes the naturalization of difference that underlies dualism. Through race, Europeans legitimated European ethnocentrism—or shall we say naturalized whiteness as a superior race? Based on this, the dualistic system of difference that Quijano offers is the following: European/non-European—which subsequently will support the other dichotomies, such as white/non-white, modern/traditional, civilized/primitive, pre-capitalist/capitalist, etc (“Coloniality of Power” 534-535). All these dualities, or dichotomies if you will, are examples of semiotic naturalization sustaining hierarchization and hegemony. They constitute the core of the European value system known as Eurocentrism. Actually, we can see in Quijano’s reiteration of the tautological construction of Eurocentric logic, a pedagogy used to prop up his argument. Some of the corollaries of the Eurocentric perspective are that the European subject is a modern, civilized capitalist, non-natural subject—a subject located on the positive side of the spectrum; whereas the non-European subject is a
natural, primitive pre-capitalist—a subject located in the negative side of the spectrum. We all know this already, right? What is new then is that Quijano, a Peruvian scholar, is declassifying and teasing out the components of a Eurocentric philosophical value system; how it is grounded and what purposes it serves. The semiotic chain that he establishes helps us understand how Europe dominates populations around the world. The strategy is that when these dichotomies are naturalized, dualism and the power it engenders are hidden because the dichotomies come from nature and not from a philosophical system of value that serves dominance. Let’s take one example from Quijano to demonstrate how the dichotomies seem ‘natural’ and thus, a reasonable and logical method to classify people. Linnaeus’s taxonomy may be one of the most well-known examples.

In the 18th century, Linnaeus developed a taxonomic system to classify organisms—first plants and subsequently all types of organisms. Quijano notes that “[t]hose who studied and debated society in Central-Nordic Europe at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th, applied the same perspective to peoples and found that it was possible to ‘classify them’ also based on their constant differentiable characteristics, empirically, their place in the couplets of wealth and poverty, control and obedience” (“Colonialidad del poder y clasificación social” 364). Thus, a scientific, natural system, that is Linnaeus’s system for plants, becomes a model for the classification of people. How is this possible? It is possible through the naturalization of race. As such, phenotypic difference appears as a natural phenomenon found in nature.
If it was possible to classify natural plants and organisms, it was possible to classify people. Several events are enabled here: one is to establish a connection between nature and society and, two, is to justify social hierarchies. As we can see, this analogy is as tricky as it is productive because racial superiority was tied to racial classification, and racial classification to nature. As this system turns around upon itself, the most important result is that whites were intellectually superior to non-whites—higher in the classificatory system, whose aim was to establish a scale of value, inferior/superior organisms. Tied to racial classification, Europeans naturalized a series of logical dichotomies to sustain their superiority. Society/nature was firmed up as one of their commanding dichotomies to create inequality—whites were semantically chained with ‘society’ while non-whites fell to the side of ‘nature.’ Let me apologize for repeating the Eurocentric axioms, but in this way, Europeans not only naturalized racial difference, they also naturalized non-whites in the sense that they were closer to nature, or pertaining to the natural domain. From here, it follows then that whites were more evolved, meaning they were civilized while non-whites were uncivilized. In the 19th century with the development of industrial capitalism, Darwin solidifies these ideas. Terms like ‘evolved’ or ‘evolution’—Darwin’s favorite terms—were used to trace and differentiate various moments of development within the colonial matrix of power—further on in history, ‘evolved’ and ‘evolution’ will subtend the category of progress. The concept of evolutionism itself is central to Eurocentrism. Nature became a way to justify social hierarchies.
By evolutionism, Quijano understands the term to mean the linear, unilateral progression of human history. To illustrate his point, he uses the case of European modernity. Thus, he explains the following. Europe needed to create a linear narrative of evolution in order to justify and maintain its power. The storyline had to be logical in its presentation, and its message was that Europe represented the apex of the world; that it dominated all other societies. The story began with the Greeks and Romans whose societies represent the center of civilization. This is the way Quijano puts it: “The defenders of the European patent on modernity are accustomed to appeal to the cultural history of the ancient Greco-Roman world and to the world of the Mediterranean prior to colonization of America in order to legitimize their claim on the exclusivity of its patent” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 543). Setting the beginning of the story at this moment in history precludes America and other regions from claiming cultural, social and epistemological superiority. The next moment, the rising action, comes in the form of Europe’s economic and cultural developments during the Middle Ages. Much can be said about this period, but it is the turning point that is relevant to us (Quijano, (“Coloniality of Power” 543-545).

The turning point arrives with Columbus’s fateful voyage across the Atlantic. The ‘discovery’ (from now on, I will use the term colonization) of America represented a completely new moment for Europe. Colonization left Europe with many unanswered questions. How were they to understand the region and its inhabitants? How were they different or similar to the indigenous populations throughout the America? Would they highlight the similarities or the differences? The climax occurs with the institution of the
coloniality of power that inaugurates the duality modernity/coloniality—a power based off the creation of race, the institution of global capitalism and Eurocentrism. The question of modernity does not enter into the equation until the colonization of America, but when it does, Europe has to privilege its modernity over any other forms of modern social organizations. Quijano states “[t]he Eurocentric pretension to be the exclusive producer and protagonist of modernity—because of which all modernization on non-European populations is, therefore, a Europeanization—is the ethnocentric pretension and, in the long run, provincial” (“Coloniality of Power” 544). European modernity trumps all others. According to Quijano, we have not arrived to the resolution. We are still reading the climax. However the structure of this narrative subtends the concept of evolutionism. There is a linear progression much like many narrative structures. As the text evolves or develops, so does Eurocentrism, according to which, Europe keeps evolving into something better and unparalleled. Thus, it becomes (‘remains,’ from a Eurocentric perspective) the center of civilization. Yet, while Europe relies on a linear understanding of the past, they still found ways to distort it temporally and spatially. As Quijano points out, Eurocentrism was constituted in a temporal/spatial distortion.

Altering previous understandings of space and time became a tool for Europeans when they began differentiating themselves from non-Europeans. Europeans had to reconstitute the identities and subjectivities of the indigenous populations and their lands in the colonized regions using a European epistemology, whose base was Greece and Rome. This not only included imposing European social, cultural, religious, scientific, political and economic models but also meant re-naming and homogenizing local geographies.4
In the act of re-naming, Europeans distorted and homogenized distinct and diverse indigenous populations into one group: Indians. Quijano writes, “To start with, in the moment that the Iberians conquered, named, and colonized America . . ., they found a great number of different peoples, each with its own history, language, discoveries and cultural products, memory and identity . . . Three hundred years later, all of them had merged into a single identity: Indians” (“Coloniality of Power” 551). This homogenization ignores previous spatial configurations. If Mayans were found in the region known today as Mesoamerica, and Incas in the region known today as South America, the term ‘Indian’ no longer noted these geographical and cultural differences. Europe’s re-constitution of the non-European subject and their geographies erased local configurations and homogenized them within the European paradigm. With this erasure went their histories (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 551-554).

Quijano argues that two consequences resulted from such homogenizations and distortions. First, erasing historical and spatial distinctions between populations reinforced Europeans’ classification of race. With other ‘id-entity’ markers erased, race became the means to classify people. Second, the homogenization and the depersonalization of each ethnic group coincided with the conquest and exploitation of their territories. From then on, their ‘id-entities’ condemned to being illiterate peasant subcultures, “inferior races, capable of producing inferior cultures” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 552). The act of re-naming created a historical distortion, which generated the devaluation and marginalization of non-European populations. For example, Quijano explains that in the case of America, “[t]he new identity also involved
their relocation in the historical time constituted with America first and with Europe later: from then on they were the past. In other words, the model of power based on coloniality also involved a cognitive model, a new perspective of knowledge within which non-Europe was the past, and because of that inferior, if not always, primitive” (“Coloniality of Power” 552). As I have already mentioned, for Europeans, the colonization of the ‘New World’ marked a moment in their linear history. For non-Europeans, the colonization was the beginning of Eurocentric history, or the modern/colonial era. Let’s develop this historical/spatial distortion by using the role that the geopolitical divisions ‘North/South’ and ‘East/West’ play.

The hemispheric division between North and South is intriguing when we see what Quijano had to say during a plenary talk he gave at the Ricardo Palma University (Peru) in 2009. In his talk, he tells a story of Francisco Pizarro. The time was the 1530s, and Pizarro and his men were in the region known today as Panama on the Pacific coast. After battles with the local population, Pizarro moved his men to a nearby island, Rooster Island (today the island is part of Colombia). Once there, Pizarro sent a letter to the governor of Panama asking for reinforcements. The governor received his message and sent reinforcements. However, there was a caveat. He sent the men to order Pizarro and his company back to their post on the Panama coast. Quijano recounts this moment as follows: “But, there, Pizarro showed who he was. He rejects returning, takes out his sword, traces a line in the sand of the island, crosses it towards the South, and delivers his famous harangue: ‘By over there, to the North, those who want to be poor. By here, to the South, those who want to be rich’” (Quijano, “La crisis del horizonte” 7). For
Quijano, the retelling of this anecdote serves two purposes. First, the story demonstrates how geography becomes interpolated with power (and wealth)—something he calls the “geography of power” (Quijano, “La crisis del horizonte” 6). As articulations of power, geographical divisions acquire colonial meanings. The South signifies wealth; its counterpart, poverty. Second, the anecdote reveals how Eurocentrism eventually flip-flops the signification of these geopolitical axes. Today, the meaning has been inverted: the North represents riches while the South symbolizes poverty. Space and geographies are relative to power.

However, it is not only the North and the South that come to represent and reinforce the coloniality of power; the division ‘East/West’ does so as well. Quijano claims that this division comes later, not until after British hegemony materializes in the world-system in the 19th century. For Quijano, the fact that the prime meridian passes through London marks Britain’s role in the ‘East/West’ division (“Coloniality of Power” 544). In the second chapter, we will examine how Latin American Modernist poet, Rubén Dario, draws on the ‘East/West’ and the ‘North/South’ divide through the our analysis of his chronicles, letters and newspaper articles. Dario supports an ‘East/West’ alliance as a form of defense against the imperialistic threats of Latin America’s northern neighbor, the United States. Geopolitical divisions reveal the cultural repercussions of colonization and imperialism in America.

So far we have gone into great detail on strategies that Europeans used to establish Eurocentrism, which covers one side of the coin; so let’s flip the coin and look at what Eurocentrism meant from the other side of the divide, in other words, from the
perspective of indigenous populations and cultures in the Western hemisphere. We already know that Eurocentrism refers to the superiority of everything European over the rest of the world; from the alternative perspective, it also means the inferiority of everything non-European. Yet, from what we know today, many indigenous populations in America exhibited intellectual advancements that paralleled if not exceeded European ones. The often-cited mathematical and astronomical achievements of the Aztecs and the Mayans support such a claim. Eventually, none of these attributes mattered in European eyes. For Europeans, the indigenous subject was destined to be dominated, and this domination comes in various forms.

Quijano lists fourteen (yes, fourteen) features of domination in his essay “The Colonial Nature of Power and Latin America’s Cultural Experience.” The first five features of domination pertain to the racialization of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, or in other words, the institution of social classification that I mentioned before. The homogenization of distinct and diverse indigenous populations into the social ‘id-entity’ ‘Indian’ is one of these five patterns of domination. The construction of race gave way to social classification, which established a hierarchical relationship between Europeans and non-Europeans. These five patterns of domination represent the European side of the coin: Europe as superior (Quijano, “Colonial Nature” 29-30).

Quijano also exposes the non-European side of the coin, non-Europe as inferior, with the subsequent nine features. I here offer a summary of them. The conquest of America implied not only the renaming of geographies but also the destruction of the
inscriptions on these lands. This meant, indigenous paradigms, forms of knowledge, relationships and forms of communication were, on a large scale, destroyed. Europeans destroyed documents; Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, English and French replaced local languages; European cultural practices relegated local ones; indigenous urban centers disappeared or were decimated. For Quijano, the loss of these paradigms was basically a loss of autonomy, as he demonstrates using literacy as an example (“Colonial Nature” 30-31). He notes that “[t]he alphabet was indeed an exclusive possession and tool of the dominant strata and urban groups, but that urban cultures and its writing were original products of the societies in question, i.e. they were autonomous forms and vehicles for the expression of the subjectivity of an old and rich history, and an exceptionally active and creative imagery” (Quijano, “Colonial Nature” 30). Thus, it reads that while not all members of the society may be literate, those who are represent autonomy within the community. The destruction of the urban centers and the writings that recorded and expressed indigenous ‘id-entities’ erased the autonomy gained through the word. Indigenous populations went from having their own histories and cultures to “not only peasant and illiterate, but even worse, repressed and continually penetrated by alien and enemy patterns and elements” (Quijano, “Colonial Nature” 30). As a consequence, the result is that only the colonizers were literate. I mean, another duality emerges, literate/illiterate, that further hierarchize the relationship between Europeans and non-Europeans.

While the forced illiteracy of the indigenous populations was one feature of domination, Quijano claims that another was suppression of indigenous aesthetic, cultural
and religious manifestations. Colonial societies impeded indigenous visual and plastic expression. If the colonized wanted to represent or express themselves, they had to do it “through their dominators’ patterns of visual and plastic expression” (Quijano, “Colonial Nature” 30). The same went with religious expression. Colonized subjects could not practice their sacred traditions in public on a wide-scale. Residual cultural, religious and artistic artifacts and practices had to remain hidden.

Only in what could be preserved of their own world (although its institutional forms were modified to reflect the dominators’ patterns), especially in their “communities” and with their families and kinship and ritual relations, could their own values, reciprocity, social equality, and control of public authority be practiced, even though they had to be continually readapted to the changing demands of overall colonial way of life. (Quijano, “Colonial Nature” 30)

Yet, these manifestations were not left unscathed by the imposition of the colonizer’s paradigms as Quijano notes in the last part of the passage above. For him, this new structure of power radically altered previous paradigms. He calls this form of power the “colonial nature of power,” one that engenders conflict.7 The indigenous and slave uprisings during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries are evidence of this conflict.

However, as history tells us, these conflicts did not break colonial rule until the early 19th century in Latin America, and still then, Europe and their paradigms maintained a stronghold in the newly formed nations. For Quijano, the results of European domination in Latin America and the colonial nature of its power established a
historical-structural dependency on Europe. In other words, dominated populations did not necessarily identify with or help other dominated social groups. Rather, they were “more inclined to identify their interests with the dominators of the Eurocentric world in spite of their reciprocal differences and sectoral conflicts” (Quijano, “Colonial Nature” 31). They had come to depend on the European structure of power, or in other words, the colonial nature of power. Such a relationship reinforced Eurocentrism and the perception of unequal social relations. “Both the colonial nature of power and historical-structural dependency imply the hegemony of Eurocentrism as a perspective of knowledge” (Quijano, “Colonial Nature” 31). Thus, the relationship between Eurocentrism and coloniality is symbiotic—symbiotic in the sense that the colonial nature of power constructs a historical-structural dependency on a Eurocentric system. Consequently, it appears that this dependency supports the argument for Eurocentrism, or the belief that Europeans are superior to non-Europeans. However, we must remember what possibililitated the construction of this power, and this is the colonization of America.

‘Americanity:’ Coloniality, Ethnicity, Racism and Newness

In their article “Americanity as a concept or the Americas in the modern-world system,” Quijano and Wallerstein argue that the ‘discovery’ of America and its interpolation in the European paradigm initiated coloniality/modernity. For both authors, America marks the birth of the colonial/modern capitalist world-system. Quijano and Wallerstein develop a term to refer to the monumental role America had in the current
configuration of power and the establishment of the capitalist world-system. They call it ‘Americanity.’ “The creation of this geosocial entity, the Americas, was the constitutive act of the modern world-system. The Americas were not incorporated into an already existing capitalist world-economy. There could not have been a capitalist world-economy without the Americas” (Quijano and Wallerstein 549). As the ‘New World,’ America represented ‘newness.’ The authors define four types of newness: coloniality, ethnicity, racism and newness itself.

Let’s take a look at what they say about these four types, beginning with coloniality. The sociologists define coloniality as “the creation of a set of states linked together within an interstate system in hierarchical layers” (Quijano and Wallerstein 550). As Wallerstein had already argued before, such system is an arbitrary geopolitical and hierarchical reconfiguration of political constructions called states. In the case of the modern world-system, Europe occupied the superior position. Colonies like America were relegated to an inferior position. Coloniality is hence a value system. This “hierarchy of coloniality” existed in all domains—political, historical, economic and cultural ones (Quijano and Wallerstein 549-550). Yet, we may be wondering how did the geopolitical configuration come to be.

According to our authors, they understand the construction of ethnicity as one of the new cultural results of coloniality. Ethnicity became the discriminatory axis upon which difference and inequality could be established. By ethnicity, the authors mean “the set of communal boundaries into which in part we are put by others, in part we impose upon ourselves, serving to locate our identity and our rank within the state” (Quijano and
Wallerstein 550). For them, ethnicity is a dynamic construction. The construction reflects the established paradigms outlined above, present at that moment. Before the colonization of America, Wallerstein and Quijano argue that the ethnic categories of ‘White,’ ‘Creole,’ ‘Native American,’ ‘Indian,’ ‘Mestizo’ and ‘Black’ did not exist. These groups emerged with the establishment of the economic world-system or, simply put, with America. In this sense, their simultaneous emergence is the reason that our authors relate ‘Americanity’ with ethnicity. I am not so sure of the relationship between the terms ethnicity and race, but as I will suggest in the subsequent paragraph, the two terms seemed to be largely synonyms. Nevertheless, the relationship between the world-system and the construction of ethnicity does not make complete sense until we look at the modern/colonial/American/capitalist project and the modes that the project used to classify according to ethnicity strengthened hierarchy and exploitation. Although I make the argument that they are.

While we are in the midst of summarizing the four elements of Americanity, I think we must take a moment to explore the perceived difference between race and ethnicity to see if they are actually different. Since my readings of Quijano’s texts have
yielded no concrete answer, I suggest that Quijano uses the two as synonyms. Let’s see why I say this. In his article “Questioning ‘Race,’” Quijano takes up the relationships ‘sex/gender’ and ‘color/race’ to argue that the relationship between color/race is a double mental construct while only gender in the relationship ‘sex/gender’ is a mental construct. For him, sex is biological. By biological, he means that “sex and sexual difference are real; they are a subsystem within the overall system known as the human organism—comparable to blood circulation, respiration, digestion, etc” (Quijano, “Questioning ‘Race’” 49). This leads him to conclude that sex is “part of the biological dimension of the whole person” (Quijano, “Questioning ‘Race’” 49). The reproductive traits generate sexual difference. On one hand, one sex fertilizes and, on the other, the opposite sex carries the progeny to term. For Quijano, these distinct biological roles are what he refers to as sexual difference. His argument, and ultimately, this biological classification reminds of Linnaeus’s work, doesn’t it? Nevertheless, Quijano argues that gender, as a mental construction is edified upon a biological distinction, sexual difference. In this sense, “. . . the intersubjective construct of ‘gender’ has a biological point of departure” (Quijano, “Questioning ‘Race’” 49). He uses this biological point of departure in the ‘sex/gender’ paradigm to highlight the difference between ‘sex/gender’ and ‘color/race.’

As I have already stated, Quijano asserts that both color and race are mental constructions. Unlike sex, color has no biological function. Whereas the presence of ovaries or testicles determines biological function, the color of skin does not. Hence, for our author, both color and race are constructs. Yet, Quijano ascertains that color predates the creation of race. We may be wondering how long the concept color antedates race,
but Quijano does not offer us an answer. He just tells us that color precedes race. Now, for him, race materializes with the colonization of America. “The idea of ‘race’ was born ‘America;’ it originally referred to the differences between ‘Indians’ and their conquerors (principally Castilian)” (Quijano, “Questioning ‘Race’” 50). I am going to emphasize this point, perhaps unnecessarily, but he states that race surfaces with America. Isn’t this what Wallerstein and he said about ethnicity? My argument is that, in their work, race and ethnicity are synonyms, and I think this example supports my argument. Both race and ethnicity emerge with the colonization of America, and both refer to a set of markers that distinguish one group from another: Indian/Castilian, for example. Nevertheless, by race, is he referring to skin color? My answer to the question is yes and no, (and yes, the issue is tangled). In the same article I am citing here, race, in its inception, according to Quijano, like the term ‘Indian,’ was not tied to color. He writes: “The first conquered people to whom future Europeans applied the idea of ‘color’ are not, however, the ‘Indians.’ They are the slaves who were kidnapped and sold from the coasts of what is now known as Africa, and whom they called ‘blacks [Negroes]’” (Quijano, “Questioning ‘Race’” 50). What is he saying here? It appears he is saying that, at the moment of America’s colonization, the construction of race does not refer to color. For him, it was not until later that the term ‘black’ both referred to color and race.

I had said that while, for Quijano, race does not necessarily refer to skin color; I had also claimed that Quijano would say that race refers to skin color—an apparent contradiction. Nonetheless, in his essay “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America” Quijano writes that race “originated in reference to the phenotypic differences
between conquerors and conquered” (534). So how do we reconcile the seemingly contradictory responses? I argue that we can divide his use of race into two categories: race as ethnicity and race as phenotype. Both are interrelated yet different. Take race as ethnicity: Quijano and Wallerstein define ethnicity as a set of boundaries that are both self-imposed and imposed by the ‘other.’ In this sense, race as ethnicity refers to the boundaries that distinguish groups. The term ‘Indian’ implies a series of boundaries that not only refer to phenotypic distinctions but also cultural, religious, political and social ones. Race as ethnicity subsumes race as phenotypic distinction. I take this to mean that what our author is trying to point out is that eventually both basically come to signify the same thing. For him, the term ‘black’ connotes both color and race or, in other words, race as phenotypic distinction and race as ethnicity (which includes a series of in-group and out-group distinctions). We have to remember the semantic chaining that occurs within the coloniality of power. For example, white is to be civilized, capitalist, Christian, etc; black or Indian is to be primitive, anti-capitalist, pagan, etc. To repeat, it appears that our author uses ethnicity and race interchangeably given that ethnicity subsumes the category of race. This has proved to be a longer than anticipated detour from the concept of Americanity, but a needed one. Let’s now continue with the third element of newness, racism.9

Racism solidifies social and labor divisions in the world-system in the subsequent centuries. The authors maintain that the reality is that racism does not necessarily exist only in overt manners, but also in systemic ones. “The underlying reality of racism does not always require the verbal or even the surface social acting out of racist behaviour”
(Quijano and Wallerstein 551). I have already briefly examined racism above and will continue to do so in the next section, but there is one significant point that the two scholars make that is worth noting here. They argue that universalism and meritocracy harbor and sustain racism in the world-system.¹⁰ “The extra added plus is that a meritocratic system justifies racist attitudes without the need to verbalize them. Those ethnic strata, who perform more poorly do so because they are racially inferior. The evidence seems to be statistical, hence ‘scientific”’ (Quijano and Wallerstein 551). In other words, the social Darwinist attitude ‘survival of the fittest’ supports racism. The logic goes along the lines that some will be more capable to succeed due to naturally superior characteristics. Coupled with these capabilities and strong work ethic, these ‘superior’ individuals merit an excessive accumulation of capital. This line of thinking founded in naturalism justifies socioeconomic inequality and hinders attempts to understand the roots of social inequality, namely racism and Eurocentrism. Can we not say that what these scholars are doing is connecting the dots between global capitalism, coloniality and racism? The birth of the colonial/modern world-system engendered a universalism of racism lurking in discourses like those of meritocracy and science.

The last form of newness is newness itself. For Europeans, America was an epistemologically free zone ready to be ordered and named by them. As our authors state, the area was free from the remnants of the feudal system. Europeans could institute the capitalist system within the region without challenge from Europe’s feudal past. America represented this newness. “It was the independence of the Americas which represented the political realization of newness that was deemed to be better” (Quijano...
and Wallerstein 552). However, our authors note that all geographies and populations in the Western hemisphere were not equal. North America was to be deemed more ‘modern’ than the region to its south given “it better incarnated ‘newness’” (Quijano and Wallerstein 552).  

Race as Logic: Articulations of Race, Id-entity, Labor and Rationality

For Quijano, race becomes the axis upon which coloniality of power and knowledge exerts itself. His main argument is that race (as a colonial construction) was the classificatory device that organized social relations on a worldwide scale. As we point out above, by race, he understands the phenotypic distinction of people around the world that emerged at the end of the 15th century and bear out the notion of difference. While some may question this claim, for Quijano, the understanding of race in its current form, I mean, the way the term circulates today, dates back to the colonization of America. Thus, in Quijano’s system, race became one of the logics through which social classification was organized during colonization. He states it in this way: “…race and racial identity were established as instruments of basic social classification” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 534). At the risk of repeating myself and for the sake of understanding Quijano’s logic, by social classification, he means the classification of peoples according to phenotypic characteristics, or, in other words, race. The result of such classification produced new ‘id-entities’ that were to become reified—blacks, Indians, mestizos, mulattoes, whites, and so on. Therefore, it is fair to presume that
relating race to ‘id-entity’ would be the first articulation of the coloniality of power. Quijano tells us that id-entity markers acquired a phenotypic meaning. “Terms such as Spanish and Portuguese, and much later European, which until then indicated only geographic origin or country of origin, acquired from then on a racial connotation in reference to new identities” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 534). From now on, I will use ‘race/id-entity’ to mark that particular form of global power.

The relationship had initial repercussions, as Quijano notes. For European colonizers, race ‘legitimated’ the conquest of America and other regions of the world; it ‘justified’ European violent confrontations with indigenous populations throughout America; it also set the course for Eurocentrism to evolve. What is more important, race became one of the tools to ‘naturalize’ the hierarchization of subjectivities. Skin color determined the social position of subjects in the global power constellation; it determined who was superior and who was inferior. “So the conquered and the dominated peoples were situated in a natural position of inferiority and, as a result, their phenotypic traits as well as their cultural features were considered inferior. In this way, race became the fundamental criterion for the distribution of the world population into ranks, places, and roles in the new society’s structure of power” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 535). It was only through this process that Europe was able to establish itself at the apex of global social relations. Yet, race/id-entity does not nearly begin to account for the constitution of the coloniality of power.

The consequences of the construction of race as a tool of social classification go far beyond the relationship between id-entity and race. For Europeans, race ‘disqualifies’
alternative forms of knowledge and subordinates them to the European episteme—one founded in the Cartesian divide between the body/non-body. Race controls labor within the capitalist system. It differentiates and hierarchizes the forms of production and the producers. Race even turns subjectivities into capital. What we will take up in the next section are the various articulations of race in the colonial/modern world. We will look at the articulations: race/labor, race/rationality and race/modernity. All three are highly interconnected and I argue (and I think Quijano would agree), that coloniality of power could not exist without each piece of the pie.

With the colonization of America, which enabled the invention of race and racial *id*-entity, came the birth of world capitalism. Colonization instituted both constructs. For Quijano, encountering the American continent and colonizing it restructured the economic domain, which became articulated around capital. Previous forms of labor were consolidated within a global capitalist system that regulated the relationship between production and the market. Although, in the article, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America,” Quijano maintains that all previous forms of production control—slavery, non-paid positions and servitude—were absorbed by the capitalist system and became essential parts of the global market. In this sense, he sustains that “each form of labor control was no mere extension of its historical antecedents. All of these forms of labor were historically and sociologically new” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 535). He gives us three reasons for the novelty of these forms of labor: (a) the production objectives, (b) the relationship with the market, and (c) the development of new configurations and characteristics. Firstly, the production
objectives became oriented towards a global market. All forms of labor became organized with the goal in mind of producing goods destined for the global market. In this way, labor control was distinct from its antecedents. Secondly, a new relationship with the market emerged. Each mode of control depended on the global market. All forms of control became interpolated with capital and the market. Production and labor control were not independent microcosms. Rather, they formed part of a totality, part of a new global economic system. Thirdly, given the re-articulation of labor control, new economic configurations emerged. “[A] global model of control of work was established for the first time in known history. And while it was constituted around and in the service of capital, its configuration as a whole was established with a capitalist character as well. Thus emerged a new, original, and singular structure of relations of production in the historical experience of the world: world capitalism” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 535-536). The global capitalist system instituted labor control and division of labor based on social classification.

By race/labor, Quijano refers to the articulation between race, control and division of labor. We said before that Quijano states that phenotype determined the division and control of labor. This relationship was present from the onset of the European intervention in America. Skin color determined the difference between wage and non-wage labor, whites being the wage earners and non-whites being unpaid laborers. Quijano reminds us that the genocide of indigenous populations in America was not due so much to plagues and the conquest as it was to the exploitation of the populations through forms of unpaid, disposable labor. Eventually the indigenous populations
decreased so drastically that Europeans had to find other sources of non-wage labor. Following the logic of race/labor, Europeans looked to the shores on the other side of the Atlantic, and I would add, even the Pacific. Black populations began to replace indigenous ones as the form of manual, disposable and unpaid labor, and subsequently Asian laborers came to work as indentured servants. Consequently when we examine the category of labor or when we organized knowledge considering the nature and logic of capitalism, we come face to face with the transoceanic and global nature of the world (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 537-540).

Nonetheless, we must note the role of slavery in America and in global capitalism. Not only was slavery the means through which capital was produced, black subjects were capital themselves, circulating in the global market as commodities. “Slavery, in America, was deliberately established and organized as a commodity in order to produce goods for the world market and to serve the purposes and needs of capitalism” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 550). In addition to slavery, other modes of production like serfdom, reciprocity and independent commodity production were forms of labor control present in America and the global capitalist system. Quijano argues that while these types of labor are pre-capital forms (as the Eurocentric perspective would claim), the previous modes of labor continued to play a role in capitalism. All forms “were also articulated around the axis of capital and the global market” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 550). Race determined the actors in these modes of production. We have already seen how race relegated indigenous and black populations to unpaid, forced labor under slavery. This practice continued for centuries. After blacks replaced
indigenous subjects, the indigenous populations did not gain access to wage earning labor. Rather, as Quijano states, they were subsumed by serfdom. Again, they participated in capitalism as non-wage labor.

Generally, only whites occupied salaried positions. They were the wage earners. Accordingly, we not only see a relationship between race/labor but also race/capital. Whites had access to capital, whether as producers or merchants. Non-whites either were capital in the form of commodities or unpaid, manual labor. Within the global capitalist system, the control of labor and, ultimately, capital is tied up in the coloniality of power. Quijano argues that labor control was articulated around the capitalist wage-labor relation. “This articulation was constitutively colonial, based on, first, the assignment of all forms of unpaid labor to colonial races (originally American Indians, blacks, and, in a more complex way, mestizos [and mulattoes]) in America and, later on, to the remaining colonized races in the rest of the world, olives and yellows” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 539). According to Quijano, the second reason why the capitalist wage-labor articulation is colonial is that whites occupied the salaried positions in the capitalist system—something I have already mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph.

We have now seen how Quijano articulates race in relation to id-entity, control of labor, division of labor and global capitalism. Yet, the web of coloniality is still not quite unraveled for the purposes of this project and for our understanding of coloniality. One of the questions that remain is why is it that non-white races were deemed inferior? The answer lies within Quijano’s articulation of race/rationality. By race/rationality, Quijano refers to the discrimination, exploitation and domination of non-white races based on the
Eurocentric perspective that non-white races are inferior due to their incapacity to reason ("La crisis del horizonte" 9).

Europe’s colonization of the new world left Europeans with a conundrum. They had not known that this ‘New World’ had existed. Christopher Columbus was looking for India, not for America. When he accidentally stumbled on this continent, he initiated a series of debates under the rubric of ‘discovery’—which is colonization for us. Amongst these rubrics, one of the most vital in regards to the reorganization of society and labor revolved around the ontological status of the indigenous populations. Were they people or animals? That was the question. If they were animals, they could be used as beasts of burden and enslaved. If not, the issue was open to other venues.

One such debate occurred in Valladolid, Spain, from 1550 to 1551. The king convened a meeting to debate the issue and determine the morality of using indigenous populations as forced labor. Two Dominican priests, Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda debated the issue, posing it as such: were the indigenous populations superior or inferior to Europeans? Using previous arguments from Aristotle, Sepúlveda used the argument that some people are mentally superior whereas some are physically superior. Indigenous people fell in the latter category, and for that reason they were more adept to physical labor. Las Casas disputed Sepúlveda’s position, and argued that indigenous people were brothers and sisters in faith.\textsuperscript{13} Ultimately, after the debate, “the king of Castile-Aragon, of future Spain, decreed, as the Pope had done before, that ‘Indians’ are humans, but that they are pagans and should be Christianized” as Quijano notes in his article “La crisis del horizonte de sentido colonial/moderno/eurocentrado”
The corollary is that whether indigenous people are considered animals or gente de razón [reasonable people], they could be used as non-wage laborers condemned to an identity of poor, agrarian peasants et aeternum.

The debate between the Dominican friars is one of the early examples of the Europeans’ attempt to deal with the ‘other.’ There is no doubt that the question of race was a factor in the debate, but it is with Descartes’ philosophical formulation that we best see the articulation between race/rationality and the coloniality of power. During the first half of the 17th century in Northern Europe, Descartes dismantled the grip that the divine had over in understanding the subject. His dictum ‘cogito, ergo sum’ replaced the divine as the mediation between the subject and the world with the subject’s capability to think. It was through reason that subjects could understand and rationalize their surroundings and make sense of the world. In consequence, reason replaced the emphasis on the soul. The consequences of this philosophical argument had several fundamental implications in the relationship between Europeans and non-Europeans (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power 555).

Firstly, Descartes’ formulation establishes an important duality, body/non-body as Quijano points out (“Coloniality of Power” 554-555). ‘Cogito, ergo sum’ separates the mind from the body. The subject’s existence owes itself to his or her capability to reason. The body is not included in the subject’s rational capacity. We only have to read or watch the news to see this duality. When individuals die, they are no longer addressed by their first and last names. Take for example, Jared List. While Jared List is living, he is referred by his proper real name Jared List. The address changes once death has
occurred. Phrases like “Jared List’s body” become the appropriate language. Jared List is not transported to the cemetery, only his body is. I argue that this commonplace, naturalized practice is a result of Descartes’ argument. What is telling in this example is the reference to Jared List’s body. A division between the subject and the body exists. While Jared List is alive, this division is not so apparent, but it is in his death that it reveals itself. ‘Jared List’s body’ articulates the body as an object. This is the duality ‘body/non-body.’

Quijano develops this duality to demonstrate how it becomes entwined with coloniality. Referring to the ‘body/non-body,’ he writes, ”What was a permanent co-presence of both elements in each stage of the human being, with Descartes came a radical separation between reason/subject and body. Reason was not only a secularization of the idea of the soul in the theological sense, but a mutation into a new identity, the reason/subject, the only entity capable of rational knowledge” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 555). This means that the body becomes an object of knowledge as Quijano points out. The body does not reason. It is the subject who has that capacity. As a result, he maintains that whereas Descartes associates the human subject with reason, he correlates the human body with nature. “In this way, in Eurocentric rationality the body was fixed as object of knowledge, outside of the environment of subject/reason” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 555). So we may be wondering, who is the subject? All human beings? Europeans? Non-Europeans also?

Secondly, these dualities ‘body/non-body,’ ‘mind/reason’ and ‘body/nature’ become a means to dominate and exploit non-Europeans, as Quijano argues. From a
Eurocentric perspective, non-Europeans are relegated to the status of object. “...[C]ertain races are condemned as inferior for not being rational subjects. They are objects of study, consequently bodies closer to nature. In a sense, they became dominable and exploitable” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 555). What I want to emphasize from this passage is the connection between rationality and the subject/object. We return to Sepúlveda’s argument vis-à-vis Aristotle. Europe dominated, exploited and discredited indigenous populations by negating them the capacity to reason. Non-white races were the body, left to manual, unpaid labor while those capable of ‘reason’—Europeans (read whites)—found themselves in a salaried position within the capitalist system. This is the articulation between race/rationality/labor.

In the quote above, Quijano makes a connection between body and nature. This duality falls within the ‘race/rationality’ category and is worth exploring. Quijano claims that the connection between body and nature made the ‘scientific’ theorization of race in the 19th century possible. “According to the myth of the state of nature and the chain of the civilizing process that culminates in European civilization, some races—blacks, American Indians, or yellows—are closer to nature than whites” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 555). In other words, phenotype acquires a new semantic charge. On one hand, the colored body is closer to nature and more primitive. On the other, the white body is civilized and more controlled. “Above all after the conquest and colonization of Africa, blacks are considered as very close to nature, and their women as virtually nature” (Quijano, “La crisis del horizonte” 10).
We can use the control of body odor as an example of the relationship between coloniality, nature and the body. From a young age, we are taught personal hygiene. We use deodorant, perfume and/or cologne to mask any unpleasant smell. Beatriz González Stephan in her essay “The Teaching Machine for the Wild Citizen” examines discourses emerging in the 16th century that continue well into the 20th century. They centered on the control of the body. She notes that cleanly, odorless, well-dressed bodies signal civilized subjects. Conversely, the unkempt, smelly, naked body indicates barbarism. The civilized body must be as far as possible from nature, meaning it should negate or hide unpleasant biological functions. Coloniality appropriates the body and its appearance to dominate non-Europeans. While I am not arguing that non-white races have smellier, unkempt bodies, we only have to look at visual representations of non-whites to see how their depictions often include a semi-clothed individual in nature. Within the logic of coloniality, these representations reinforce the constructed relationship between the body of color (race) and nature.

Before we move on to the relationship between coloniality/modernity, let’s take one more example that Quijano gives us regarding the relationship between the subject/object duality and race in his essay “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality.” He argues that we only need to look at the fields of ethnology and anthropology to see the connection between the two. Both disciplines “have always shown that kind of ‘subject-object’ relations between the ‘Western’ culture and the rest” (Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality” 174). Quijano notes that researchers use non-Western cultures as their objects of study. The Eurocentric perspective cut everything before it. The
Eurocentric perspective considers Descartes the father of modern philosophy. Approaching Descartes from modernity’s counterpart, coloniality, I would argue that Descartes’ dictum perpetuated if not strengthened the domination, exploitation and marginalization of non-European, non-white populations. Part of Quijano’s project is to overcome this subject/object duality founded in Eurocentrism and the coloniality of power/knowledge.

Coloniality/Modernity vs. Liberationist Modernity: Utopia, Rationality and Intersubjectivity

In my first year of graduate school, as I was trying to keep straight the concepts of modernism, modernization and modernity, I remember what one of my peers had told me regarding modernity. Modernity’s definition was simply ‘newness.’ To be living in modernity meant being exposed to new ideas, phenomena and technology. This definition seems to fit well with Marshall Berman’s definition of modernity in his All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity where he describes modernity as a maelstrom—a period characterized by the ephemeral and constant, chaotic change. While newness connotes change, it might not represent the ephemeral. Quijano takes up this broad definition of modernity (modernity as newness) in his essay “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America.”

By modernity, Quijano means ideas of newness, often found in forms of technological, scientific or rational newness. This definition matches the one I first
learned in graduate school. If modernity simply meant newness, then it would read that many cultures were modern. For Quijano, this definition is not geographically limited to Europe. Rather, one can argue that many cultures were modern. “With all their respective particularities and differences, all the so-called high cultures (China, India, Egypt, Greece, May-Aztec, Tawantinsuyo) prior to the current world-system unequivocally exhibit signs of that modernity, including rational science and the secularization of thought” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 543). Put differently, there were many modernities—many forms of newness around the world. Yet, often, when we think of the general definition of modernity, we set our sights on Europe as the origin of modernity. Why is that? For Quijano, this seemingly benign connection would be coloniality’s doing. This leads him to a different definition of modernity—modernity as coloniality. In this section, I will briefly detail two definitions of modernity as developed by Quijano. They are modernity as utopia and modernity as coloniality. What does Quijano really mean by modernity as utopia? Let’s find out what he says.

For many of us who define our role in academy in a social or political manner, what Quijano has to offer in his works on modernity (primarily, his articles “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America,” “Paradoxes of Modernity in Latin America” and “Modernity, Identity and Utopia in Latin America”) adds fuel to our fire because, ultimately, our hope is that the scholarship we produce and research we undertake contributes to a more just, equal and verdant world. If this is idealistic, naïve and unrealistic, this is where Quijano comes to my aid because, according to him, what was modernity if not a utopian paradigm? In other words, the colonization of America
transformed Europe and gave Europeans a reason to look to the future. According to Quijano, for Europe, America represented new possibilities and a future full of opportunities; it allowed Europe to re-imagine the world in its fashion. America’s colonization “produced a profound revolution in the European imagination and, consequently, in the imagination of the Europeanized world of domination; it produced a replacement of the past as the site of a forever-lost golden age with the future as a golden age to achieve or to construct [author’s emphasis]” (Quijano, “Paradoxes” 149).

There are several ideas to note here. First, Quijano explains that the colonization of America initiated modernity. He claims that whereas the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries lacked a vision of the future, America’s discovery reoriented Europe’s vision towards the future. “Without the new place of the future in the imagination of humanity, the very idea of modernity would be unthinkable” (Quijano, “Paradoxes” 150). Second, the emphasis on the future allowed Europe to move past restrictive, antiquated models of power located within the monarchical and ecclesiastical paradigms. According to Quijano, the proponents of these paradigms justified their authority through their strong presence in the past and offered no vision of the future (“Modernity, Identity” 203). Thus, in juxtaposition to an emphasis on tradition and the past, modernity represented possibilities, and beginning in the sixteenth century, the intellectual and economic advancements gave way to European utopias. Put another way, modernity was a liberationist project.

We might consider it peculiar that Quijano ties modernity and liberation together, especially after what we have seen here in relation to coloniality of power, but what
Quijano is doing is highlighting a particular articulation of modernity. For Quijano, modernity promised new forms of autonomy. I have just said that Europe was able to move past feudalism and despotism as a result of modernity, but the question is how was it able to overcome these paradigms. Our author states that modernity sets the stage for a rational society that would break the stronghold of these two paradigms. “In other words, the promise of modernity originated from the struggle for a rational society” (Quijano, “Paradoxes” 150). Reason became one of the fundamental articulations of modernity. Once again the Cartesian divide surfaces in this chapter, this time in relation to Europe’s transformation from a feudal society to a modern one. Furthermore, the Enlightenment embodied this rational society *par excellence*. With faith in rationality, the emergence of such movement in the 17th century crystallized modernity as the dominant European paradigm (Quijano, “Paradoxes” 150). Yet, for Quijano, he does not see the Enlightenment as a purely European phenomenon. Rather, he suggests that “there was a close association between America during the crystallization stage of modernity, the 17th century, and the movement called the Enlightenment or Illuminism” (Quijano, “Paradoxes” 150).

In this way, for Quijano, the Enlightenment was a transatlantic phenomenon that drew from systems of knowledge on both sides of the Atlantic. For example, he notes that in both America and Europe, *Las Sociedades de Amigos del País* (The Societies of Friends of the Country) promoted scientific and intellectual discovery; or even Quijano’s example of Pablo de Olavide. Living in Peru, he was eventually forced to leave the country for Europe. Once in Europe he came into contact with Voltaire and collaborated
with a group of French scholars (Quijano, “Paradoxes” 150-151; Quijano, “Modernity, Identity” 204). What our author is doing here is breaking one of the myths of Eurocentric modernity. Rather than the flow of knowledge emanating from Europe and flowing outward to other regions of the world—in other words from ‘East’ to ‘West’—, we see a reciprocal, multidirectional flow of knowledge. Quijano is challenging coloniality of power and breaking a Eurocentric myth that supported coloniality.

Quijano gives us another example of the transatlantic dialogue that occurred during modernity in his example of Andean and European rationalities. Our author argues that Andean rationality influenced Europe, especially in relation to the utopian characteristic of modernity. Andean notions of reciprocity, solidarity, collective work and intersubjectivity fueled European utopias (Quijano, “Modernity, Identity” 203). These utopian visions reoriented Europe towards the future—a future with endless possibilities and discoveries. The Enlightenment was one of the movements that engaged such utopian thought in the intellectual and scientific discoveries, wouldn’t you agree? With their eyes set on the future, thinkers of this period had their sights set on unraveling perceived mysteries within the European imaginary. In this sense, modernity was liberationist, and rationality was used to liberate (Quijano, “Paradoxes” 153). There, modernity was conceived as a promise of rational social existence as well as a promise of freedom, of equality, of solidarity, of the continuous improvement of the material conditions of these forms of social existence, not of any other. This what came to be recognized from that time forward as ‘historical reason’” (Quijano, “Paradoxes” 153). I would suggest that Quijano’s project falls within this articulation of reason given the
project’s objective of promoting a more just and equal world; because ultimately, his
definition and identification of coloniality of power serves the ends of its dissolution.

Nevertheless, whereas on one hand, modernity represented a transatlantic,
multidirectional flow of knowledge in the pursuit of scientific and intellectual progress
and discoveries (as demonstrated by the Enlightenment) and in the pursuit of freedom,
solidarity and equality, on the other, another modernity existed—a modernity founded in
coloniality. Quijano ultimately blames the unequal development between Europe and
America on this modernity, a modernity that cannot be within its counterpart, coloniality
(“Coloniality of Power” 542). For Quijano, modernity in its Eurocentric conception is
colonial. This means that modernity became a European phenomenon given the manners
in which Europeans saw themselves. Let’s remember that Europe saw itself as the
pinnacle of the world and the rest of the world as inferior. Hence, as Quijano points out,
“the Europeans imagine themselves as the exclusive bearers, creators, and protagonists of
that modernity” (“Coloniality of Power” 542). From their perspective, Europeans best
represented progress, development and rationality. This was part of their utopia.
Nonetheless, as I have already stated elsewhere, in reality, other populations were just as
‘modern,’ if not more so. So, along with all the tools that the coloniality of power
engendered, Europe had to obfuscate these rival modernities and knowledge. No one
could impede Europe’s future. For example, Quijano states that in order to argue for
Europe’s claim to modernity, “defenders of the European patent on modernity are
accustomed to appeal to the cultural history of the ancient Greco-Roman world” when in
reality “the truly advanced part of the Mediterranean was Islamo-Judaic” (“Coloniality of
Put differently, what this example shows is that Europe had to construct a myth that newness emerge from within its boundaries dating back to Greece and Rome. Devising such a myth went to substantiate Europe’s alleged superiority over the rest the world. Therefore, from this egocentric viewpoint, it only became logical that they had to impart their paradigms and knowledge of the rest of the world. In their eyes, no other society held up to theirs. We may be wondering what happened to the whole idea of historical rationality and modernity as liberation. If modernity and rationality were means for equality and freedom, wouldn’t coloniality/modernity be the antithesis of liberationist modernity? This is where rationality enters the equation again.

If historical reason prompts liberationist modernity, then instrumental reason enables coloniality/modernity. By instrumental reason, Quijano is referring to Max Horkheimer’s use of the term. Quijano explains that instrumental reason is “a relationship between ends and means. The rational is useful. And utility acquires its meaning from the dominant perspectives (i.e., that of power)” (“Paradoxes” 153). In sum, instrumental reason was used to colonize and to dominate. Our author gives us one example from the Enlightenment, differentiating the two types of rationality according to the geopolitical axis, North/South. In this example, he is referring to the divide between Northern and Southern Europe. He warns us that he may be oversimplifying the divide, but, on one hand, he argues that Northern Europe (today primarily referring to Great Britain) employed instrumental reason as a mechanism of domination, as a means and end. “The imposition of English hegemony, linked as it was to the spectacular expansion of British industrial capitalism, consolidated the hegemony of the tendencies in the
movement of Enlightenment that conceived of reason primarily in instrumental terms. The association between reason and liberation was occluded” (Quijano, “Modernity, Identity” 206). On the other hand, he states the countries of Southern Europe used reason as an ends. For Quijano, this means that Southern European countries using reason with the goal of liberation in mind. “These ends were those of the liberation of society from all inequality, injustice, despotism, and obscurantism. In other words, these ends were defined against the existing arrangements of power” (Quijano, “Paradoxes” 153). Thus, it reads that instrumental reason is the means and ends in the coloniality of power whereas historical reason (or liberating rationality as he also calls it) rejects coloniality and domination. For example, if instrumental rationality made Eurocentrism possible, historical or liberating rationality would work to undo it.

I feel it is important to note here in the body of the text rather than the endnotes that I have been drawing his discussion from two essays that quite possibly were written before his formulation of the coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge in 1992. One of the articles “Paradoxes of Modernity in Latin America” was published in the International Journal of Politics in the 1989 while the other essay “Modernity, Identity, and Utopia in Latin America” was published in John Beverley, Michael Aronna and José Oviedo’s edited work The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America in 1993. While the latter essay was published after the first appearance of the concept of coloniality of power, as you have been noted in my recapitulation of instrumental reason and historical reason, that I have been switching back and forth between both works. This is because both essays highly resemble each other. Accordingly, I would argue that
both essays precede his concept of coloniality of power. Nonetheless, we can see hints of
the concept in the works. Instrumental rationality as a tool of domination is one tool in
the complex of this global power. So it is at this moment that I want to tie these two
essays to what he has to say about modernity in an essay published after formulating the
coloniality of power. In this essay, he leaves no doubt about the connection between
coloniality and modernity. I have already often cited the essay here, but I will name it
again for clarification.

In “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America,” Quijano argues that
Europe charged itself with the task to modernize the rest of the world, or as Quijano calls
it, ‘Europeanize’ it. “In this sense, the Eurocentric pretension to be the exclusive
producer and protagonist of modernity—because of which all modernization of non-
European populations, is therefore, a Europeanization—is an ethnocentric pretension and,
in the long run, provincial” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 544). What is at the heart
of the issue for our author is that modernity is essentially coloniality, hence, his use of
“colonial/modern” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 549). The slash separates yet unites
the two terms. We have already seen what the Europeanization of the world includes, but
to reiterate, it means the social classification of the world’s populations according to race,
the economic organization and creation of capitalism as a world-system and the
formation of Eurocentrism. Isn’t this the definition of coloniality of power? As a result,
Quijano concludes that, “whatever it may be that the term modernity names today, it
involves the totality of the global population and all the history of the last five hundred
years, all the worlds or former worlds articulated in the global model of power . . .”
(“Coloniality of Power” 545). To be tautological, for our author, modernity is born out of coloniality. However, we may be wondering then what happens to the other non-European modernities. They become negated and relegated to European modernity. Within the coloniality of power, Europe dominates and relegates all non-European paradigms and subjectivities. Quijano develops a term for the universality of the global power; he uses the term “intersubjectivity” (“Coloniality of Power” 546).

As a result of European domination, within heterogeneous cultures, we can find two similar traits: labor control in the capitalist world-system and Eurocentric production of knowledge. “Europe’s hegemony over the new model of global power concentrated all forms of the control of subjectivity, culture, and especially knowledge and the production of knowledge under its hegemony” (“Coloniality of Power” 540). Suffice it to say, intersubjectivity is a transoceanic term. It captures the results of the world’s Europeanization—subjectivities all sharing the common denominator of the coloniality of power.

Epilogue:

Beyond the Coloniality of Power: Transoceanism, De-coloniality and Epistemological Democratization

There are many scholars in or associated with the field of Latin American studies working in the Quijano paradigm. One of the notable trends within the endeavors of these scholars is their transcontinental approach. We already know that Quijano has
ample set up a transoceanic framework for his concept. The concept itself ‘coloniality of power’ is a planetary one, as Quijano notes. “For such regions and populations, this model of power involved a process of historical reidentification; from Europe such regions and populations were attributed new neocultural identities. In that way, after America and Europe were established, Africa, Asia and eventually Oceania followed suit” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 540). Here, I briefly want to detail three particular scholarly undertakings that all originate from Quijano’s works. They are Transoceanic Studies, the Modernity/Coloniality Research Program and epistemological democratization. Let’s begin with Transoceanic Studies.

In the last chapter of her book *Debates culturales y agendas de campo. Estudios Culturales, Postcoloniales, Subalternos, Transatlánticos, Transoceánicos*, Ileana Rodríguez traces contemporary trends in Latin American Studies and defines Transoceanic Studies and its objectives. For her, such studies are an approximation that contests the Eurocentric understanding of the world. The scope of the studies is based on alternative imaginaries around the planet that combat Eurocentrism. The comparison of these sites of contestation is one of the objectives of Transoceanic Studies. Rodríguez maintains that the transoceanic project is founded upon the antecedents of the world-system and the coloniality of power/knowledge (Debates 198). She separates the studies from other fields of studies (those of globalization or transatlantic studies, for example) that take global phenomena into account. She writes:

> Transoceanic studies relate to globalization and transatlantic studies, but they expand their borders. The differences between a transoceanic and
global approximation is that while globalization concentrates on the
dynamic of the market and its regulatory nature, essentially proposing
means or ways of deregulation, and while transatlantic studies concentrate
on cultural transactions, transoceanism contemplates a larger universe of
possibilities. Take the idea of transoceanic routes as a metaphor to
propose alternative imaginaries of the world and is interested in all
possible spaces of interaction, concentrating in the re-articulation of
geographic areas, logically and culturally. (Rodríguez, Debates 190)

Put differently, Transoceanic Studies break from Eurocentrism; the re-articulations come
from the regions and populations silenced by the coloniality of power. Transoceanism is
an approximation that originates from subaltern studies. Like subaltern scholars,
transoceanic scholars approximate themselves to transoceanic studies from a peripheral
framework. They question Eurocentrism with the intent to destabilize it. “Transoceanic
Studies work against the grain and return the gaze from the erased worlds of the
periphery” (Rodriguez, Debates 184). In contrast with Transatlantic Studies that deal
with the triangular axis between Europe, Africa and America, Transoceanic Studies are
open to any region of the world.

Rodríguez lays out two fundamental questions that emerge when talking about
transoceanic studies: (a) how does this field will contribute to previous ones and (b) why
transoceanic and not another term like global, transcontinental, comparative. To answer
the first question, she uses Wallerstein and Quijano’s arguments. Both scholars
established a universal or global framework. As we saw above, Quijano develops his
concept ‘coloniality of power,’ arguing that Eurocentric global configuration of power owes itself to coloniality. Everything is articulated around Eurocentric capitalism. Wallerstein and Quijano examine how the colonization of America established an economic world-system where vertical relationships between states and areas and the control of labor contributed to the geopolitical configuration of the world. That is, coloniality engendered the economic world-system. Wallerstein also helps us with Rodríguez’s second question, “why transoceanic?” According to her, for Wallerstein, “ocean is a metaphor of the commercial circuits that maintained the old connections between Asia, Africa and Europe with the crude and hard, unknown parts of the ends of the earth” (Rodríguez, Debates 193). For Rodríguez, the “[o]cean is a metaphor that signals the approximations that indicate the commonalities produced by ‘coloniality of power’ and ‘coloniality of knowledge,’ the world-system and the Eurocentric desires to suppress the other cultures from the civilizing dialogue” (Debates 194). Thus, we see the influence Quijano has in Rodríguez’s scholarly endeavor. Now that we have reviewed Rodríguez’s responses to the two questions planted at the beginning of this paragraph, let’s continue with her work to see how transoceanic studies expand upon subaltern studies and at the same time, take geographical articulations into account.

Rodríguez understands subaltern studies in the context of the transcontinental circulation of knowledge. For example, the notion of ‘subaltern’ originated in Italy with the works of Antonio Gramsci. Later, intellectual groups from India and Latin America appropriated Gramsci’s term with the aim of studying the subaltern in each respective place. Rodriguez says, “The supposition was that such category [subaltern] could cross
continents putting into contact not only three different continental masses and diverse national realities, but, also, the disciplines of literature and history—this was and still is one challenge that underlines the transoceanic impulse” (Debates 188). Transcontinental dialogue between the center and the periphery is what transoceanic studies seek, as Rodríguez reiterates. For her, the studies are not limited to triangular relationships but rather open up to polygonal ones. The flexibility of the studies follows transcontinental dialogues. She names various thinkers whose research already follows a transoceanic route. Enrique Dussel, Walter Mignolo, Gayatri Spivak, Dilip Gaonkar, Partha Chatterjee, Maso Miyoshi, Ranajit Guha and Dipesh Chakrabarty are some of these intellectuals. All of them follow trajectories that “. . . favor the multiple articulation that these new paradigms produce, studies concerning the dialogic asymmetries between the center and the periphery but that embrace what they have in common” (Rodríguez, Debates 197).

For Rodríguez, transoceanic scholars are interested in the study of (a) exploitation, subordination and the domination of non-Europeans, (b) the Eurocentric elite and Eurocentric paradigms and (c) the ‘coloniality of power/knowledge’ and world-system as European offensive articulations against the rest of the world. “Transoceanic research responds to Eurocentrism as the idea of only one generative center of the cultures of modernity and postmodernity and shows the contribution that comes from other areas, vital to complete the aspiration of universalism proposed by the Enlightenment and the ones of globalization promoted by postmodernity” (Rodríguez, Debates 198).
The Modernity/Coloniality Research Program has much in common with Transoceanic Studies. In Walter Mignolo’s “Introduction: Coloniality of power and de-colonial thinking,” he opens the journal edition dedicated to de-colonial thinking by maintaining that de-colonial thinking is “a particular kind of critical theory” (“Introduction” 155). What I want to focus on here in the following paragraphs is the genealogy of the Modernity/Coloniality Research Program and its relation to other fields of study. According to Mignolo, the program differs from post-colonial studies, cultural studies and Marxism. For him, the principal difference between the four fields is the genealogies of each. For example, he explains that the foundational texts of post-colonial studies are those of Antonio Gramsci, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha and Ranajit Guha. “De-colonial projects at its turn, emerged in contemporary intellectual debates from the critical foundation established, in Latin America, by José Carlos Mariátegui, in Perú (in the 1920s), and by dependence theory and philosophy of liberation, in the 70s spread all over Latin America” (Mignolo “Introduction” 163). Can we see the distinction Mignolo is making here? Is he not pointing out the fact the de-colonial project’s genealogy originates in Latin America?

The difference between the post-coloniality and de-coloniality is the geographical distinction between the origins of both fields. But, we may ask, why is this point significant? I would argue that Mignolo’s distinction is valuable because it justifies a transoceanic approach within the field of Latin American studies. This argument dovetails with Rodríguez’s when she argues that transoceanism has been present within
Latin American studies with corollaries like subaltern studies. While we must stress that subaltern studies did not originate in Latin America (as Mignolo points out with the inclusion of the Indian subaltern scholars in post-colonial studies), Latin American studies generates and promulgates transoceanic, transcontinental thought.

Mignolo’s genealogical distinction between post-colonial studies and de-colonial ones is not to limit de-colonial studies to the geo-social construct of Latin America. Rather, just like transoceanic studies, de-colonial studies are transoceanic in its comparisons and objectives. Take what Mignolo says.

…”[T]he history of de-colonial thinking can be traced back. And we find, in that genealogy two pillars: individual thinkers and activists like Guaman Poma de Ayala in colonial Peru, Ottabah Cugoano, in British Caribbean and then in London, in the eighteenth century; Mahatma Gandhi in nineteenth-twentieth century India; Amilcar Cabral in the Portuguese colonies of Africa; Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon in the French Caribbean; W.E.B. Dubois and Gloria Anzaldúa in the US. (Mignolo, “Introduction” 164)

So in this sense, can we not argue that such a comparative, transcontinental framework can and does belong in Latin American studies? The Latin American genealogy proposed by Mignolo makes transoceanic claims. Now that we have addressed the difference between post-colonial and de-colonial studies, let us continue with Mignolo’s distinction between Marxism and de-colonial thinking.
In his distinction between the two fields, Mignolo makes reference to Quijano’s previous work that outlines the difference between both. However, let’s focus on Mignolo’s argument here. He sees the difference between the two forms of thinking based on positionality and colonial difference. In other words, Marxism and de-coloniality come from two distinct loci of enunciation. While Marxism rejects economic exploitation and oppression, it emerged within a Western episteme. “Marxism is a critical and liberating project dwelling in the local history of Europe, in a fairly homogeneous community where workers and factory owners belonged to the same ethnicity and, therefore, Marxism relied on class oppression and exploitation of labor” (Mignolo, “Introduction” 164). So what Mignolo is pointing out here is that Marxism is predicated upon an economic difference, or in other words, social class. Mignolo does not negate the contributions Marxist thought had outside of Europe, especially in fighting exploitation in former colonies. “However, subjectivities and knowledge in the colonial world and ex-colonial world are as important as divergent from European experiences” (Mignolo, “Introduction” 164). He argues that outside of Europe, social classification did not occur on an economic basis, but rather a racial difference. Can we not see the influence of Quijano’s work in Mignolo’s argument? So to summarize, whereas both projects seek to liberate the exploited and oppressed, they come from different loci of enunciation, one within imperial difference and another within colonial difference.

Finally, Mignolo’s argument regarding the difference between de-colonial thinking and cultural studies is similar to his critique of Marxism. According to our author, not only were cultural studies born out of a Western episteme in the 1950s, but
they also generally only focus on one side of the modernity/coloniality equation. Cultural studies scholars focus on modernity in place of its counterpart. For example, Mignolo says that “Garcia-Cañclini and Martín Barbero version of cultural studies focused on the media, the city and the technological transformations in Latin America. Basically their important work remains within the perspective of modernity, even if peripheral one as in Latin America” (Mignolo, “Introduction” 165). In other words, such scholars still remain within a Eurocentric framework, within the Eurocentric dualities that established colonial difference. The emphasis is on progress, development, civilization, ‘newness.’

It is at this point where we arrive to Mignolo’s understanding of de-colonial thinking or the objectives of the Modernity/Coloniality Research Program. “De-colonial projects dwell in the borders, are anchored in a double consciousness, in mestiza consciousness (racial and sexual). It is a colonial subaltern epistemology in and of the global and variegated faces of the colonial wound inflicted by five hundred years of the historical foundation modernity as a weapon of imperial/colonial global expansion of Western capitalism” (Mignolo, “Introduction” 165). Other scholars involved in some capacity with the de-colonial project are Freya Schiwy, Catherine E. Walsh, Ramón Grosfoguel, Arturo Escobar, María Lugones and Nelson Maldonado Torres. Lugones, Schiwy and Maldonado-Torres examine the intersection of gender, subjectivity and coloniality while Walsh explores the (re)articulations of indigenous subjectivities in Ecuador through the framework of de-coloniality. Grosfoguel and Escobar are committed to the de-colonial project and proponents of border thinking.
We have yet to address the elephant in the room. If Transoceanic Studies and the Modernity/Coloniality Research Program work to liberate the epistemologies, subjectivities and geographies squashed down by a Eurocentric one, how does Europe (read the West) fit into the equation? Can the North or the West be part of the dialogue in rejecting Eurocentrism and coloniality? The answer has to be yes. If not, how could I (a white male who grew up in the second wealthiest county in the United States and in a city that has the most churches per square mile in the world) be able to argue for a transcontinental dialogue that foments equality while shuns exploitation, oppression and marginalization. Boaventura de Sousa Santos’ work examines the geopolitics of knowledge. He seeks to break the hegemony and dominance of the global North and in its place establish a dialogical, egalitarian relationship between the global North and global South that affirms justice, equality and sustainability.

Let us take an example from one of Sousa Santos’ edited volumes, *Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies*. In collaboration with João Arriscado Nunes and Maria Paula Meneses, Sousa Santos opens the edition with “Opening Up the Canon of Knowledge and Recognition of Difference.” The three authors examine the articulation between geopolitics and diverse knowledges. From the beginning, the authors make clear three claims from which they are operating: all knowledge is situated, an invention and never complete. “The very act of knowing, as pragmatist philosophers have repeatedly reminded us, is an intervention in the world, which places us within it as active contributors to its making. Different modes of knowing, being irremediably partial and situated, will have different consequence and
effects on the world” (Sousa Santos, Arriscado Nunes and Meneses xxxi). One of the consequences of different modes of knowledge is that Eurocentrism has hierarchized the European epistemology over non-European ones. Europe had to construct hierarchies in order to create hegemony, maintain dominance and disqualify non-Europeans as equals; simply, Europe had to construct the ‘Other.’ “The production of the West as the hegemonic knowledge required the creation of the Other, constituted as an intrinsically disqualified being, a collection of characteristics that were markers of inferiority towards the power and knowledge of the West and, thus, available for use and appropriation by the latter” (Sousa Santos, Arriscado Nunes and Meneses xxxv). Isn’t this Quijano’s argument too? As we have seen, coloniality of power privileges everything European and relegates everything not. While colonialism may have ended in the political sense, many colonial vestiges have carried over in the form of coloniality. “Colonialism has come to an end as a political relationship, but not a social relation, persisting in the shape of coloniality of power” (Sousa Santos, Arriscado Nunes and Menesis xlix). The edited work’s goal is to unravel the current manifestation of global power, that is, the coloniality of power and coloniality of knowledge.

The three scholars argue from an epistemological diversity and democratization that recognizes knowledge as an invention and as incomplete. “Epistemological diversity is neither the simple reflection or epiphenomenon of ontological diversity or heterogeneity nor a range of cultural specific ways of expressing a fundamentally unified world. There is no essential or definitive way of describing, ordering, and classifying processes, entities, and relationships in the world” (Sousa Santos, Arriscado Nunes and
Meneses xxxi). The European epistemology is not a priori other ones. Put differently, European hierarchies are constructions that attempt to establish dominance over other epistemes without having any innate superior quality. With this claim in mind, we arrive their main argument in the introduction. They maintain that a democratization of knowledges and epistemologies and a dialogical relationship between episteme can merge if we recognize a plurality of knowledges and epistemologies.

A cosmopolitan epistemology must start from the recognition of the presence of a plurality of knowledges and of different conceptions of human dignity, nature, and the world itself, as the case from South Africa, Mozambique, Brazil, India, and Colombia suggest. The principle of incompleteness of knowledges is a basic condition for the possibility of epistemological dialogue and debate among knowledges. (Sousa Santos, Arriscado Nunes y Meneses xlviii)

Again, we note the transoceanic connections that our authors are presenting us. To achieve epistemological diversity and democratization, we must incorporate each region into our object of study.

While critics might charge such a task as promoting moral and ethical relativism, where anything goes, I think we can look at the terminology that Sousa Santos and the others are using here. Not only are they promoting a cosmopolitan epistemology or plurality of knowledges, they are promoting a democratization of such knowledges. “The proposed pluralism of knowledges will facilitate radical democratization and the decolonization of power and knowledge” (Sousa Santos, Arriscado Nunes y Meneses
xlix). The term democracy implies equal participation and consensus, rule by consensus of the people. In this sense, I think we can reject claims of moral and ethical relativism by underlining the concept that they are using, democracy. They are arguing for a dialogue between the ‘North/South’ and ‘East/West.’ They want to overcome the North’s power in ordering and naming the rest of the world. Saying it another way, they want to destabilize Hegel’s understanding of Europe as the center and apex of the world. For this to happen the South must be involved in the discussion. They propose that learning from the South should occur, and in a more general sense, they argue for a democratization of epistemologies.

So what do these distinct yet related projects share in common? All three depart from Quijano’s work on coloniality of power and coloniality of knowledge in order to promote diversity and equality while exposing and seeding out forms of coloniality. In a world where geopolitical divisions (and academic departments for that matter) still organize the world, this point is significant. Since the inception of these projects, scholars are looking to find where forms of coloniality may be lurking. This is the tricky task for scholars because this requires us to question seemingly benign configurations to see how they continue to promote Eurocentrism. All three projects examine the intersection between knowledge and geopolitics in order to deconstruct the coloniality of power.
Chapter 2

A Divided Consciousness: Geopolitics, (De)coloniality and Identity in Rubén Darío’s Chronicles, Essays and Letters

“Darío did not have either homogenous or invariable ideas, more than obsessive ones of life and death; and he warned that if in his songs there was politics, it was because politics were universal” (Ramírez, El señor de los tristes 20).

“And his vision of España contemporánea, Darío is precisely attractive for contradictory, and because, furthermore, reality contradicts him, in turn, many times. In the middle of his jungle of harmony, the noises of the world did not always enter as they were” (Ramírez, El señor de los tristes 20).

In this chapter, I examine a series of Rubén Darío’s chronicles, essays, newspaper articles and letters published in Parisiana, Crónicas políticas, Prosa política, Escritos dispersos, Escritos inéditos, Crónicas desconocidas and Epistolario selecto. My chapter departs from the premise that Darío’s works are political in nature. Through a selection of texts, my aim is to examine Darío’s locus of enunciation to determine if Darío speaks from within or outside of Eurocentrism, after Quijano. In other words, my objective is to ascertain if Dario demonstrates Eurocentric thinking, as many critics have argued. For the most part, my argument coincides with critics who argue that Darío is a Eurocentric subject. However, I maintain that such a conclusion does not fully represent Darío’s subjectivity. Rather, Darío’s chronicles, essays, newspaper articles and letters present a
non-European subject whose positionality becomes disoriented, especially faced with imperial capitalism from the North and marginalization from the East—i.e., Europe. Put simply, Darío’s texts reveal a subject with a fractured, or divided, consciousness—a consciousness that, on one hand, reproduces Eurocentrism and, on the other, questions the same paradigm. In particular, we note a politicization of Darío’s work beginning in 1898 until his death in 1916 that reflects the geopolitical instability of the Western hemisphere, namely in the Spanish American War, Latin America’s economic transformation based on a capitalist economic system and his own experiences living in Paris. During this period in Darío’s life, we see our author’s vacillating (and often contradictory) opinions on modernity, race, capitalist modernity, Europe and the United States. Perhaps the best way to characterize this period in Darío’s life is his oscillation between a Eurocentric (colonial) positionality and a non-Eurocentric (de-colonial) one.

Using Quijano’s claim on the coloniality of power/knowledge as the framework for this chapter, specifically Eurocentrism, we come to understand Darío not simply as a Eurocentric subject, but a subject with a divided, conflicted consciousness—a consciousness that reflected the geopolitical and ontological instability at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century in Latin America, Europe and the United States.

In 1897, W. E. B. Du Bois published an article in *The Atlantic* newspaper titled “Strivings of the Negro People.” This article would later become the first chapter of his well-known book *The Souls of Black Folk*. In the article, Du Bois expounds upon the struggles that blacks faced at the time of publication, using his experiences as an example of these struggles. He recounts moments where individuals tiptoed around the question
of race and racism: “They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil” (Du Bois, “Strivings” 1)? In other words, how does it feel to be perceived as different—a difference constituted by and steeped in racism? Du Bois claims that he became aware he was different during his childhood. He realized that white individuals looked at and treated him differently based on the color of his skin.

Such a revelation led him to develop the term ‘double consciousness.’ By double consciousness, he means two images of the self within the same subjectivity. The first image comes through the subject’s imagination and the second is born through the ‘other’s’ imagination. To put it differently, double consciousness is the way Du Bois saw himself from his own perspective and from the perspective of whites. He writes: “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of the others, of measuring one’s soul by the take of the world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (Du Bois, “Strivings” 1). So for the sake of clarity, I risk repeating myself for the third time. Double consciousness is constituted as two consciousnesses of the self—one constituted by the ‘other’ and the other constituted as a self-image. The subject has to identify him or herself according to the two potentially contradictory images.
Yet, the goal of Du Bois’ now famous article was not to simply define the term ‘double consciousness.’ Rather, he goes beyond the problematics of race and racism to argue “Negro blood has yet a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without losing the opportunity of self-development” (Du Bois, “Strivings” I). Du Bois was tired of feeling like an outsider in his birthplace. For him, to overcome this feeling, skin color needed not be an exclusionary and discriminatory marker in defining the members of the nation.

Du Bois’ argument sounds familiar if we return to Quijano’s argument on social classification and race. Let’s remind ourselves that the construction of race becomes a discriminatory axis upon which social classification occurs. What it new here, in the case of Du Bois, are the questions of citizenship and the nation. I will explore this connection more in the fourth chapter on Central American testimonial literature, but for purposes here in this chapter, I examine coloniality in relation to geopolitics and literature, particularly focusing on the letters, essays, articles and chronicles of Rubén Darío.

You may be wondering why I decided to begin the chapter focused on race/identity using Du Bois as an example since Dario and Du Bois’ situations are not exactly parallel. For one thing, Du Bois is framing his concept within the paradigm of race and his experiences as a person of color in the United States. Race, as a discriminatory marker, excluded him; it was the axis upon which double consciousness revolved. Dario’s case is different. The idea of double consciousness, for Darío, revolves around a geopolitical axis of knowledge. His struggle was not so much a
struggle as a result of phenotypic classification, but rather a struggle as a result of a hierarchization of knowledge. Through literary production, Latin America *modernismo* severed previous colonial relations of knowledge that still permeated the politically free Latin American nations. Darío’s notoriety as an author and poet in Europe strengthened a bidirectional flow of knowledge across the Atlantic. However, this does not mean that Darío did not have to grapple with a history of coloniality. In his writings we see how he vacillates between colonial and de-colonial paradigms, in other words, between Eurocentrism’s affirmation and its rejection. And we must note that there are many more examples of Eurocentrism’s affirmation in Darío’s works than its rejection. In this sense, we use the concept ‘double consciousness’ to describe Darío’s interpellation within a colonial/de-colonial framework of knowledge. To affirm our use of the term, we find a similar idea in Iris M. Zavala’s *Colonialism and Culture: Hispanic Modernism and the Social Imaginary*. She writes: “Darío’s originality consisting in projecting and monitoring the modern subjectivity as a self-consciousness always haunted by otherness” (68). Thus, beginning the chapter with Du Bois’ concept of double consciousness helps establish my argument.

My aim in this chapter is to emphasize the political content of Darío’s literary works and demonstrate Darío as a man with a divided consciousness. Save an example or two from his poetic works, I will use Darío’s chronicles, articles, essays and letters from the following works, *Parisiana, Crónicas políticas, Prosa política, Escritos dispersos, Escritos inéditos, Crónicas desconocidas y Epistolario selecto* to argue on behalf of the political nature of Darío’s works. I maintain that traditional understandings
of Rubén Darío as a Eurocentric, apolitical, conservative individual largely preoccupied with literary aesthetics do not fully represent Darío’s subjectivity. Rather, by examining his chronicles, articles, essays and letters to authors, politicians and friends, we come to see a different side of Darío—a Darío politically engaged in the geopolitical relationships between and within Europe, the United States and Latin America. Though I do agree with others like Erick Blandón, that Darío is, for the most part, a colonial subject who is caught within Eurocentrism. Even so, there are some examples that show Darío in a de-colonial light, in particular his criticism of Eurocentrism, nationalism, democracy and imperialism. In this sense, Darío exhibits a double consciousness of sorts. Through his writings we see an individual grappling with his locus of enunciation. In many cases, he projects Latin America as a developing continent lacking of history and cultural production when compared to Europe’s while in other cases, he defends Latin American intellectualism and Latin America itself when confronted with negative stereotypes originating from Europe and the United States. He is also an individual who will state in a prologue, “Prólogo para Historia de tres años, por Jesús Hernández Somoza,” that he is not political yet his extensive chronicles and newspaper articles would argue otherwise.¹⁸ What I am getting at here is that Darío was a subject with a divided consciousness. The messages of his writings can be contradictory when compared. Most times, it appears he writes from a Eurocentric, colonial perspective and in few instances, from a more de-colonial perspective.

My question now is how to position Darío not only from the perspective of double consciousness but also from the point of view of coloniality of power/knowledge.
developed by Quijano. I am using this phrase throughout this chapter to signify the ways that Eurocentrism, social classification and capitalism influence and shape our author’s thoughts and knowledge. At this point, you may be wondering where does Quijano’s work fit in with Darío’s literary production? Where does the holy trinity that makes up the coloniality of power and knowledge—Eurocentrism, social classification vis-à-vis race and world capitalism—enter into the equation with Darío’s work? During my research, I went back and forth on my answers to this question. Can I argue that Darío was within a de-colonial framework or does my research lead me to the common perceptions that Darío was Eurocentric in his thinking? I will articulate both sides and at the end you can see if you agree with me that the best way to describe Darío is as a colonial subject who, throughout his career, revealed de-colonial preoccupations; hence, my calling Darío a subject with a divided consciousness. What I can say for certain though, is that Darío was deeply concerned about geopolitics and thinking. His prose reflects this relationship. He was also concerned with the literary market—who had access to literary works from Latin American authors and who was publishing these works—and his own financial well being, working within the market to capitalize on his literary output so he could enjoy his time in Paris as well as survive.19 Up to this point, I have made many claims without concrete example so let’s begin with one of my main claims: the political nature of Darío’s works.

*Forays into the Political: Darío’s Political Upbringing*
In my readings of Latin American *modernismo* and its precursors, and after being acquainted with the works of many Latin American modernist poets and writers, like Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, José Martí, Amado Nervo, Enrique Gómez Carrillo, Rubén Darío, Leopoldo Lugones, José Juan Tablada, Juana Borrero, Delmira Agustini, Alfonsina Storni, José Santos Chocano, José Enrique Rodó, I was left with the notion that we could classify a majority of Darío’s works as apolitical. Influenced by Parnassianism, Symbolism and Decadentism, Darío’s literary production by and large followed the mantra ‘art for art’s sake.’

Take what the poet exclaims in “El rey burgués:” “Sir, art is not in the cold marble bundles, no en the worn paintings, nor in the excellent Mr. Ohnet. ¡Sir! Art does not dress pants, nor does it speak in bourgeoisie, nor puts dots on all the íes. It is august, it has cloaks of gold or flames, or it walks naked, and it mixes clay with fever, and paints with light, and it is opulent . . .” (Darío 19). In other words, art’s ends are not political, monetary, utilitarian or materialistic but rather purely aesthetic. The reason to produce art was to produce something beautiful.

Julio Valle-Castillo in his introduction to a collection of Darío’s chronicles and essays titled *Prosas políticas* shows how Darío tried to portray himself as an apolitical poet whose function was above politics. According to Valle-Castillo, the resulting image of Darío was a man who lived in an ivory tower and in his own world. Valle-Castillo points to several instances in Darío’s poetic works that the poet claims to be disinterested in the political order and only interested in an aesthetic one. Yet, the purpose of Valle-Castillo’s introduction and the collection of Darío’s prose are to undo such a representation because Darío was, indeed, a political individual. His writings reflect such
a claim. Besides the fact that he wrote about political and national events in Europe, North America and Latin America, his poetic project resulted in being political. Referring to Darío, Valle-Castillo writes that “with the action of his word, he revolutionized forms, and that, together with Martí and other Indians, vanguardized the first and most important movement of verbal liberation and artistic independence that our America has produced y that until today, we have imposed on even Spain” (XXXIII). Like Valle-Castillo, I was left with the impression that Darío’s poetic and literary works were political.

His work “Cantos de vida y esperanza” contains various poems that speak to the political matters. Take Darío’s poem “To Roosevelt” for example. In the poem, the poetic voice addresses President Theodore Roosevelt, saying: “Primitive and modern, simple and complicated./ one part Washington and four parts Nimrod!/ You’re the United States,/ you’re the future invader/ of the guileless America of indigenous blood/ that still prays to Jesus Christ and still speaks Spanish” (Darío, Selected Poems 167-169). These lines from the first stanza break from the early Modernist poetic tradition of ‘art for art’s sake.’ Rather, we see Darío’s poetry acquire a political tone. The lines themselves describe a common anxiety within Latin America at the beginning of the 20th century: the United State’s imperialistic policies that were threatening the sovereignty of Latin American nations. The poetic voice does seem all that optimistic for Latin America’s future, calling the United States the future invader of naïve America. Yet, the poetic voice does not give up so easily. It juxtaposes the United States’ achievements and history with those of Latin America.
Yet this America of ours, which has had poets/ since the olden days of Netzahualcoyotl,/ . . . the America of the great Montezuma, of the Inca,/ the fragrant America of Christopher Columbus,/ Catholic America, Spanish America,/ the America where noble Cuauthémoc said:/ "This is no bed of roses"; that America/ which shakes with hurricanes and lives on love;/ men with Saxon eyes and barbarous souls, it lives./ And dreams. And loves, and quivers, and is the daughter of the Sun. Beware.

Spanish America lives! (Dario, Selected Poems 169-171)

This fragment of the fifth and final stanza calls upon indigenous and colonial histories—histories that set Latin America apart from its northern counterpart. The poetic voice highlights the differences between the North and the South, as if to say to the United States, you cannot ignore nor destroy the rich and diverse histories and cultures in Latin America in your attempt to colonize it. Latin America has forged its own distinct identity with a mixture of indigenous and Iberian roots. The voice drives home this idea with reference to José Martí’s “our America.” It is not the United States’ America; it is “our America.” In other words, Latin America will not go down without a fight. “There are a thousand cubs set loose from the Spanish Lion./ For God’s sake, one would need to be, Roosevelt,/ a terrifying Sharpshooter and a mighty Hunter/ to hold us in your ferrous claws” (Dario, Selected Poems 171). The defiant political tone of this poem greatly differs from the version of Dario who was only preoccupied with the aesthetic and artistic production.
We may be wondering if Darío’s political objectives only appeared later on in his life after the publication of *Azul...* and *Prosas Profanas*. However, if we examine his autobiography, we learn that Darío was born into a family closely linked to Latin American politics. In his *Autobiografía*, Darío states that he was born to Manuel García (Darío) and Rosa Sarmiento. Having been an arranged marriage of sorts, the relationship between García and Sarmiento did not last longer than eight months—one month before the birth of Félix Rubén García Sarmiento, or otherwise known as Rubén Darío. At a young age, Darío went to live with his great uncle, Colonel Ramírez, and his great aunt, Bernarda. Shortly after his addition to Ramírez household, his godfather would become General Jerez, a famous Nicaraguan political leader and military man whose statue can be found in the central plaza of León. Even though Darío had contact with his biological father, he did not consider him as such. Rather, Colonel Ramírez acted as his father. Darío writes: “And my ‘uncle Manuel.’ Because Manuel Darío appeared as my uncle. And my real father, for me, and as it had been taught to me was, was the other, the one who had raised me from my first years, the one who died, Colonel Ramírez” (Darío, *Autobiografía* 7). Darío explains that Colonel Ramírez sided with the Central American unionists—a political party that advocated for the union of the five Central American nations into one nation. As we can see, politics were part of the family. Darío writes that during his childhood he was accustomed to the political conversations that occurred around him. He remembers these moments, writing: “At night, there was gatherings at the front door, a poorly paved street with round and pointed stones. The *hombres de política* arrived and there was talk of revolutions. The wife would caress me in her lap.
The conversation and the night would close my eyes” (Darío, *Autobiografía* 5). My objective in pointing out these passages from Darío’s autobiography is that from a very young age, Darío was surrounded by talk of revolution and politics.

It is also worth noting that Darío found himself to be a spiritual man. In his autobiography, he discusses his encounters with the Jesuits. Influenced by his aunt Rita, he would frequently visit one of the Jesuit houses and even attended the spiritual exercises the Jesuit priests practiced. The significance of this fact might go unnoticed if it were not for the fact that Darío had spent time with Jesuits rather than another religious order of priests. Founded by Ignacio de Loyola, the Jesuit order is still known today for their social and political activism inside and outside the church. Darío makes no mention of this aspect in his experiences with the Jesuits, but couldn’t we imagine that he was exposed to political and social matters during his time spent with them? But, as Darío and the Jesuit priests who knew him stated, Darío was not destined for priesthood (Darío, *Autobiografía* 9). He was a writer, a poet, and it was this vocation that flourished in his adolescence.

Stating that at three he had already learned to read, some of Darío’s first books read were *Quijote*, the Bible and the works of Spanish writer Leandro Fernández de Moratín. Darío also began writing at a young age. He wrote poems about a topic that any adolescent boy might write about: love. Nevertheless, it was when Darío was fourteen that he began professionalizing his vocation by writing for one of the local newspapers, *La Verdad*. The newspaper was political in its focus and sided with the opposition movement. Darío’s job at the newspaper was to write combat articles. As
you could imagine, Dario’s post did not sit well with the Nicaraguan government. The
government accused him of being a slacker (*vago*), but a liberal doctor for whom he was
working came to his defense. Dario then decided to dabble in something less polemical,
masonry. After a short stint in that field, he later was called to Managua by a group of
politicians. They wanted to meet this ‘poet child.’ There in congress, Dario found
himself being under the wing of the liberal congress members. “I was protected by
Congress members belonging to the liberal party, and it is clear that in my poetry and
verses burned the most violent, uninhibited and crude liberalism” (Dario, *Autobiografía*
13). The same members then presented the rest of congress with a proposition: sending
Dario to Europe so he could continue his studies there. As a result, Dario was called
before the president at the time, President Chamorro, and asked to recite some of his
poetry. The results did not go in Dario’s favor. He had chosen to read poetry that was
full of “antireligious radicalism” (Dario, *Autobiografía* 13). Chamorro’s response—as
recounted by Dario—was: “‘My son, if you write like that against the religion of your
parents and your homeland now, what will it be if you go to Europe to learn worse
things?’” (Dario, *Autobiografía* 13). Dario lost his chance to go to Europe then, but it
wouldn’t be long before he ended up on the other side of the Atlantic (Dario,
*Autobiografía* 5-13).

I will come back to Dario’s autobiography later on in this chapter, but I must note
that I have and will leave out many other details pertaining to Dario’s biography given
the scope of my chapter. My objective in reviewing Dario’s life is to convey to you, as
the reader, that Dario’s childhood and adolescence intimately exposed him to politics in
Central and South America. His early forays into journalism also were closely associated with politics. It is the newspapers where we find much of Dario’s politically oriented content.

_The Geopolitics of Knowledge: Imitation and Cultural Subversion in Latin American modernismo_

In Iris M. Zavala’s book _Colonialism and Culture_, she argues that _modernismo_ was a master narrative of anti-imperialism and decolonization in Latin America. For her, the aesthetic objectives of the movement could not divorce themselves from the political, writing: “there fully emerged the new historical poetics of modernism as sustaining narrative of anti-colonial struggle” (Zavala, _Colonialism_ 3). Having this idea in mind, Zavala conceptualizes _modernismo_ in the following manner. _Modernismo_ reflected Latin America’s identity crisis at the end of the 19th century given the imperialistic objectives of the United States and the question of modernity itself. For Zavala, Cuba became the symbol of struggle as its independence from Spain was quickly marred by the United States’ attempts to colonize the island. Yet, the struggle Cubans put forth to counter colonization comes to represent Latin America’s struggle for decolonization. This is where _modernismo_ enters into the picture as a poetics of struggle. “Modernism could conjoin modernity and revolution through a coherent discourse for an experience of decolonized, independent modernization and progress that would create the material conditions for the satisfaction of basic human needs” (Zavala, _Colonialism_ 37). In what
we can say is a unification of the three—modernity, revolution and *modernismo*—the aesthetic goals of the movement challenge Eurocentrism. Latin American modernist writers appropriated European modernity in order to challenge its supposed superiority. As Zavala points out, Latin Americans were no longer objects of knowledge to Europeans but rather subjects of knowledge. *Modernismo* breaks with a unidirectional flow of Eurocentric knowledge and establishes a ‘polyphonic dialogue’ (Zavala, *Colonialism* 37-40). Now, Zavala’s argument sounds similar to Quijano’s if we remember what he argued about Eurocentrism and the subject/object duality. Let’s remember that Quijano postures that Europe often looked at non-Europeans not as subjects, but as objects. He notes the disciplines of ethnology and anthropology as legacies of this view.22

Not only does Zavala argue that *modernismo* spins this subject/object duality on its head, but she also maintains that the modernist project challenged instrumental reason and rationality. The aesthetic became one of the forms of resistance. “Writing became identified with a critique of the mastery of reason and rationalization—‘instrumental reason’—which, . . . at this juncture became a powerful incentive and a shrewd diagnosis of the cultural and ideological conflicts of capitalist expansion” (Zavala, *Colonialism* 39). Once again, this takes us back to Quijano’s works in that he defines reason within two purviews of modernity—liberationist modernity and coloniality/modernity. Instrumental reason is used to colonize, to subjugate and to exploit whereas historical reason is used to liberate. As Zavala notes, poetic discourse thus becomes the medium through which new forms of knowledge are transmitted (*Colonialism* 52). For her, Dario and his poetry are
an example of instrumental reason’s rejection. She claims that Darío’s archetype “‘I, poor painter of nature’ (yo, pobre pintor de la naturaleza)” rejects the materialism (i.e. instrumental reason) that has emerged in a capitalist society (Colonialism 64). Once again, Darío’s “El rey burgués” comes to mind. The story’s poet is this “I, poor painter of nature” who is only to be left forgotten in the cold outside by the materialistic Bourgeoisie king. While Zavala cites Darío as one of the Latin American modernist poets who supports anti-imperialism and decolonization, how do we understand Darío’s admiration for and imitation of European intellectuals?

It is common knowledge the Rubén Darío’s works imitated many previous European literary traditions: Parnassianism, Symbolism, Decadentism and Romanticism. He does not hide his appreciation for Victor Hugo, Paul Verlaine and Théophile Gautier. In fact, Dario uses these European writers for his own poetic inspiration; they even become the subjects of particular newspaper articles, chronicles and poems. Knowing this, is it not easy to accuse Darío of being a colonial subject? I mean, at first sight, imitation implies orthodoxy. Imitation is the reproduction of an already performed practice or manifestation. In other words, imitation comes after the ‘original.’ There is a temporal separation between the imitated and ‘original’ forms. Within the logic of coloniality, the ‘original’ form would be the superior one. In this sense, imitation/originality thus becomes another register through which the coloniality of power articulates itself. Nevertheless, imitation becomes one of the methods that colonized groups used to resist Eurocentrism, as contradictory as it may seem. Take what Quijano says regarding imitation and cultural subversion. He argues in his essay, “The
Colonial Nature of Power and Latin America’s Cultural Experience,” that the act of mimicry, or imitation, is an act of subversion. Imitation comes as a result of coloniality. The colonizer has systematically destroyed or negated the colonized society’s cultural practices. As a result, the colonized “were forced into a culture of imitation, a simulation of alien cultural patterns, and feelings of shame about their own” (Quijano, “Colonial Nature” 32). With few options of overt resistance and subversion, indigenous populations manipulated the cultural practices of their oppressors with the ends of cultural subversion. Their manipulation came in the form of appropriation.

Although the dominated imitated the dominator, the dominated gained a degree of autonomy over representation. “In a word, the dominated learned first to give new meaning and sense to alien symbols and images, and then to transform and subvert them by including their own elements in all the images, rites, or expressive patterns of alien origin” (Quijano, “Colonial Nature” 32). One of the best and most well known examples of this subversion through imitation is Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala’s work El Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno. Using Europe’s written tradition and Spanish, he produced a text whose illustrations privileged the Andean over the European—all in a manner that went unnoticed to the European eye. Guaman Poma’s work imitated yet subverted. He used the European paradigm of written communication and Spanish to ultimately subvert Eurocentrism. In the same vein, some three hundred years later, a man born into middle class stature in Nicaragua would become one of the best imitators of European literary traditions and reproduce them in such a way that his works subverted a perceived European literary dominance on a global scale. This man was Rubén Darío.
He did not merely imitate but rather cultivated a poetic voice that astonished other writers around the globe. In this sense, his initial poetic imitation became a form of subversion.

For Quijano, there are two forms of imitation. First, he delineates a counterproductive imitation that merely mimics or reproduces European paradigms. I liked to think of the behavior of parrots when describing this mode of imitation. The parrot simply repeats the words of the original enunciation. The second form of imitation is more dubious than the parrot’s mimicry. Behind the imitation lies the desire for self-expression. This form is imbued with a creative process. The would-be imitators learn and reproduce the dominant forms and paradigms so that they can find “the sources and perspectives of something different, original, and of their own, in contradistinction to the Eurocentric patterns” (Quijano, “Colonial Nature” 32). Darío’s work falls in the former category, imitative yet subversive. Quijano tells us that such a practice must emerge from the “middle strata lying between the ‘Europeans’ and the ‘Indian’ or ‘black’” (Quijano, “Colonial Nature” 32). Yet, while there are early examples of individuals like these, for example, Guamán Poma, Quijano points out that it was not until the beginning of the 20th century when we started seeing the emergence of this imitative subversion (Quijano, “Colonial Nature” 32).

I raise this correlation between what Quijano’s argument and Darío to point out that even within his poetry, the argument exists that Darío’s works are political. Whether Darío would like it or not (and he most likely would not), his locus of enunciation made his works political. We have to remember that his poetic works _Azul, Prosas profanas_ and _Cantos de vida y esperanza_ came from the same ‘child poet’ of Nicaragua. In this
sense, his works are a poetics of alterity. I recognize how polemical this claim might be. However, let’s not forget Leopoldo Lugones and Rufino Blanco-Fombona’s criticism of Darío. Lugones claims that Darío’s preferred form of government is a monarchical one while Blanco-Fombona calls Darío conservative and servile. Blanco-Fambona goes so far to say that Darío “‘never loved liberty, and at the core, our America”’ (cited in De la Torre 266). As Antonio M. de la Torre notes in his article “Consideraciones sobre la actitud politico-social de Rubén Darío,” “If we let ourselves be guided by the pen of a Leopoldo Lugones, a Rufino Blanco-Fombona or an Enrique Gómez Carrillo, our poet turns out to be staunchly conservative, monarchical and anti-republican: a self-serving opportunist without any other loyalty than to despotism and power, or at least a egotistical spirit that, from his ivory tower, made himself impassive before the pains of humanity” (19). De la Torre’s article published in 1955 shares the same argument that I make here in this chapter. He rejects Lugones and Blanco-Fombona’s claims and argues that Darío can be characterized as a writer who was preoccupied with social and political issues in Latin America and other regions of the world. To demonstrate these preoccupations, we can classify Darío’s letters, chronicles and essays according to geopolitical divisions. These geopolitical relationships are the following: (1) a geopolitical axis wholly within Latin America—Central America, Chile and Argentina, (2) a geopolitical division between Latin America and the United States and (3) a geopolitical axis between Europe and Latin America, in particular, between Spain, France and Latin America. In the subsequent sections, I will detail these geopolitical divisions and demonstrate how they reveal a writer with a conflicted consciousness—a man who
seems to struggle with his own identity within and outside of coloniality. As a result of these disparate, and perhaps contradictory writings, we find reason for the varying opinions of one of Latin America’s most famous and influential authors.

**Modernity in Latin America: Capitalism, Autonomy and Cultural Deterritorialization**

It is often said that Latin America entered the world economy in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century. For example, Ángel Rama and Cathy Jrade, among others, mark the last three decades of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century as Latin America’s interpolation with the world economy and thus, entrance into modernity.\textsuperscript{26} Now if we take what Quijano and Wallerstein say in their essay “Americanity as a concept, or the Americas in the modern world-system,” that is, that it was actually America that possibilitated the capitalist world economy, it seems that Rama and Jrade’s claims do not dovetail with Quijano and Wallerstein’s. However, upon closer look at what each author means by modernity and the entrance into the world economy, splitting hairs over each respective argument may not be necessary for our purposes here. Take what Rama says for example in his *Rubén Darío y el modernismo*. Rama writes:

> The fundamental changes that the last decades of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century witness are carried out over constant cultural background, which can be defined as an invariant of Hispanic America. Given its origins, based on the system of displacement of autochthonous indigenous cultures, replaced violently by Renaissance Spanish culture; due to development, throughout the 16\textsuperscript{th},
17th and 18th centuries in the regime of monopoly and dependence, its culture, an image of its economy, is of a colonial type. (Rubén Darío 19-20)

Rama notes here that a legacy of coloniality has been present in Latin America since its colonization starting at the close of the 15th century. While he is not establishing the 500-year connection between modernity/coloniality as Mignolo and Quijano do, Rama is alluding to the idea here by linking culture with economy. He understands a relationship between the two, just as our coloniality scholars have. For Rama, Latin American cultural production has never strayed too far from European models. For example, he says that criollos were semi-autonomous subjects, still attached to Europe in various ways. The persistence of Eurocentrism in Latin America leads Rama to suppose that “the history of Hispanic American culture, save few indigenous focuses primarily condemned to folklorism—it is worth saying, to the poor copy of a consolidated past—, is the obedient shadow of the history of European culture” (Rama, Rubén Darío 20). Yet, he does not leave his characterization of Latin American cultural production at that—simply a relegation of cultural production as iterations of European artifacts.

Rama notes a struggle for autonomy in the same criollo subjects. The independence movements at the beginning of the 19th century would be an example of this struggle, as he argues. The criollo bourgeoisie rejected Spanish colonial rule. We might say this opposition is best described as political. The bourgeoisie sought to replace Spain’s rule with their own. They wanted political autonomy, and this desire for autonomy also manifested itself in literature as well. “But furthermore, the obsessive
intent to gain autonomy is defined through the perseverance of Hispanic American self-reflection in the continent’s literature and criticism, and the abusive weight of colonial design through the proven incapacity to affirm its circumstance and problematic as of universal validity” (Rama, Rubén Darío 21). This literary manifestation of autonomy is curious given the contradictory nature that emerges with Latin America’s deeper interpolation with the world economy. Rama writes that the capitalist economic system plunges Latin America in a state of neocolonialism—both culturally and economically, yet, at the same, produces conditions for greater cultural production.²⁷ On one hand, Latin America becomes a playground for foreign investment. Rama mentions Porfirio Díaz’s economic policies as an example—policies that opened Mexico up to foreign investment. For Rama, this economic neo-colonization transfers over to the cultural domain. “Not only in the primary interpretation, because Hispanic American writers dedicate themselves to the imitation of French poetry, but rather because they feel themselves called to do it insofar that they live, obligingly, related experiences to the industrial and cultural centers” (Rama, Rubén Darío 24). By this, he means that the expansion of capitalism in Latin America extends itself beyond the confines of the economic domain and into the cultural sphere. It is worth noting that Rama’s observation is later the topic of Fredric Jameson’s seminal work *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.*²⁸ For both Rama and Jameson, capitalism dictates cultural production. Rama argues that capitalism reshapes the cultural landscape through the imposition of the division of labor, the circulation and consumption of goods, a re-
conception of objects as economic goods, economic subjectivism and the production of a capitalist rationality (*Rubén Darío* 21-24).

A poetics of capitalist rationality exemplifies the spillover of the economic system into the cultural domain. By this, I mean that modernist poetry exhibited capitalist characteristics. Rama develops and explains this idea using Darío as an example. Rama points out Darío’s desire to produce newness. “We already saw that this attitude was Darío’s typical one: ‘My success—it would be ridiculous not to confess it—is owed to novelty,’ he says to Groussac, and in repeated occasions, he underlines the contemporary modernist writers’ trait of ‘novel’ invention…” (*Rama, Rubén Darío* 25). This newness, for Rama, marks two important resulting consequences of Latin America’s economic transformations. First, our author tells us that newness follows the logic of capitalism (which we can imagine refers to the literary production and its circulation). Second, he states that poetic creation—in the name of novelty—fosters a subjectivism engendered by the capitalism. By this, we might use *modernismo’s reino interior* as an example of this subjectivism. Darío cultivated such an idea in his poetry. Poets had the liberty to construct poetic worlds to their liking. In other words, capitalist expansion in Latin America coincided with liberal notions of self and subjectivity. As Rama argues, Latin American modernist poets found a new degree of autonomy in this economic subjectivism.

The expanded market also gave way to new opportunities for Latin American modernist writers. They could sustain themselves with work within the growing field of journalism. The expansion of Latin America’s market meant new economic
opportunities for a certain population in Latin America—or at least this is what Rama argues in his work *Las máscaras democráticas del modernismo*. He claims that Latin America’s entrance into the world market coincided with a moment in history called “the century of science.” This period was “also the period of democracy, with its overcrowding, its vulgarity, its materialism and its egalitarianism” (Rama, *Máscaras* 15). For Latin America towards the end of the 19th century, this meant a socio-economic shift that translated into a cultural one. In other words, as Rama tells, new economic opportunities for previously excluded subjects engendered new possibilities of literary production as these subjects found ways transcend their previously limited economic resources (Rama, *Máscaras* 18). Latin America’s further interpolation with the world economy meant a decentralization of power, and, as Rama notes, this transformation did not go unnoticed. He mentions Enrique José Rodó’s concern with the democratizing process. It is well known—as Rodó reveals in his *Ariel*—that he opposed North American style democracy. He thought it would lead to the vulgarization and mediocrity of society. Nevertheless “even Rodó who, with his equilibrium, bet that a new hierarchical selection of the best would follow that vulgar democratization, there was not anyone who did not live the period as a subversion, because effectively the bourgeoisie and dependent modernization gave rise to a democratization that destabilized established values . . .” (Rama, *Máscaras* 17). We may be wondering what specifically caused this socio-economic upheaval and cultural democratization in Latin America.

According to Rama, it was a confluence of phenomena that all hinged upon the economic development in Latin America from 1870 to 1920. This is what Rama has to
say. During the 50-year period, Latin America saw an influx of European immigrants, particularly in Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil. By 1900, the population of Latin America had doubled since 1850. The result of population growth gave way to a greater degree of urbanization in Latin America. “For the first time in the history of Latin America, cities triumph over rural areas…” (Rama, Máscaras 34). The growth and formation of Latin American metropolis engendered social change. The resulting urbanization created an environment where the exchange of ideas occurred more freely and spontaneously. For example, Rama notes the role that cafés played as meeting places for Latin American intellectuals. Before, meetings were often private and had a ceremonial character to it. Cafés changed that practice. Writers, poets and intellectuals met in these more informal, public settings. In addition to increased exchange of ideas in urban areas, the economic transformations led to a push in education. New schools opened up, equipped to handle specialized fields like medicine and law (Rama, Máscaras 34-39).

As I mentioned briefly above, even aspiring writers found themselves with more opportunities (though Darío will note in his chronicles that Latin America still lacked ways to support literary production). One of these opportunities was supporting their incomes by writing for Latin American presses. Darío’s content that I am analyzing here primarily comes as a result of his journalistic endeavors. Perhaps his most notable position was his association with La Nación in Buenos Aires. Employment at presses allowed many Latin American modernist writers to cultivate their aesthetic works on the side or even incorporated them in the newspapers, as Darío did with many of his works (Rama, Máscaras 34-41). In this sense, we have a feedback loop. The economic
expansion helped foment individualism while individualism fomented economic production. “Individualism, effectively, would have governed the social and economic life of Latin America . . .” (Rama, Máscaras 28). It is worth noting that Rama might have us to believe that Latin America’s social stratification was turned on head with the region’s further economic interpolation. Although, I think when incorporating the question of race into Rama’s analysis, we might beg to differ on the extent of the socio-economic transformations. By and large, indigenous populations still remained excluded and marginalized.

Nevertheless, such rapid modernization did provoke an anxiety among Modernist writers that was evident in their writings. As we will see in the remainder of this chapter, Darío’s chronicles and essays published in the newspapers illustrate an existential crisis for our poet. The future of Latin America was uncertain amongst all the changes, and given the growing power of its neighbor to the North and Europe’s continued influence and/or presence, Darío’s writings evince an identity crisis. Rama mentions that the chaos of the period appears in Modernist poetry, but it is largely the chronicles where Latin American modernist writers publish their anxiety and concerns for the future. Julio Ramos’ often-cited Desencuentros de la modernidad en América Latina analyzes the chronicler’s role in covering and opining about societal and cultural transformations in Latin America. For Ramos, José Martí’s chronicles illustrate angst over the changes. Ramos claims that, for the Cuban poet, the city was a place of violence and fragmentation. Martí was apprehensive of the modernization and urbanization (Ramos 72-74). Many of his chronicles recount natural disasters that stop modernization in its
tracks. The chronicle itself had an important role in capturing the writer’s preoccupations—as Ramos tells us. The chronicle often was a hybrid discourse. Many Latin American modernist writers whose day jobs required them to write for newspapers would incorporate aesthetic elements into the retelling of the day’s events. The chronicle represented the struggle between capitalism and literary production in its dual objective of informing and, at the same time, making literature.

Inform/create literature: the opposition is key and its historical meaning beyond the end of the century, does not reduce its field to the space of the press: it is an indication, rather, of the struggle for power over social communication that has characterized the modern intellectual field since the emergence of the “culture industry,” of which the newspaper (before film, the radio and television) was the basic means at the end of the century. (Ramos 110)

Thus, the chronicle not only yields a cultural, historical and social portrait of a particular moment in the past but also reveals—through the author’s self-reflexivity—the aesthetic, moral, ethical, political and identity concerns of Latin American modernist writers. Some of Dario’s first chronicles reveal his concern over the political state of Central America.

*Beyond National Borders: Central American Unification, The Stars from the South and the Coloniality of Power/Knowledge*
As we already saw in the summary of Darío’s early years, he came from a family who favored the union of the five Central American nations. Evident in Darío’s early works, he shared this sentiment of unification with the rest of his family. In two particular writings penned by a 22-year-old Darío “La Unión” and “Prólogo a un folleto político,” Darío argued for Central America’s unification. Both these writings appeared in the newly minted newspaper The Union and outlined the newspaper’s objective—to be the voice of proponents of a unified Central America. We begin by examining “The Union.” To establish the newspaper’s objective, Dario begins the article by drawing parallels to European history. For Darío, attempts of political unification date back to the Roman Empire.

The old world remained subjugated by the Roman soldier’s dagger; later the barbarian destroys that unity formed by conquest, the large empire conserved with much care by the first of the Augusts, remained substituted by the multitude of factions that, in time, came to form a homogeneous totality under Charlemagne’s scepter, the restorer of the power of the Caesars. The work of the barbarians was destroyed; unity triumphed and was reestablished. (Darío, Crónica política 24-25)

What is noteworthy in this passage is, first, Darío’s incorporation of European history and, second, his reference to the ‘ancient world’ as the Roman Empire. Both are examples of Eurocentric thinking. In the first example of Eurocentrism, rather than looking to the history of his own continent, he looks across the Atlantic to establish his argument for unification. This transatlantic gaze locates our author within a Eurocentric
framework. By referencing European history, he establishes a transatlantic connection between Europe and Central America—all indigenous histories remain hidden underneath a European one. This means that through his appropriation of European history, Central America becomes an extension of Europe. In other words, Darío is a Westernized subject here. In the second example of Eurocentrism, the first sentence of the passage reveals Eurocentrism. If we wonder what our author is referring to when he says the ‘ancient world,’ we come to understand that he is not referring to the entire globe, but rather the Roman Empire as the ‘ancient world.’ The adjective ‘ancient’ sets a temporal distinction between Europe and Latin America. Let’s not forget that for the Europeans, Latin America was the ‘New World.’ The dichotomy ‘ancient/new’ becomes another tool through which Europe establishes coloniality. Additionally, the use of ‘world’ in place of the Roman Empire excludes other regions around the world: Asia, North America, Latin America and Australia. From a Eurocentric perspective, the world was Europe, and Darío uses the terminology that connotes this notion.

Darío’s use of European history in his newspaper article is an example of Westernization. Four hundred years after Columbus’ arrival to Latin America and Caribbean, we still see the effects of Westernization. The audience of Darío’s article was not Europe; it was Central America. So why write about Europe’s history? The reason for this action may very well be the Western discourses that influence Darío’s ideas. In his essay “Meditaciones anti-cartesianas: sobre el origen del anti-discurso filosófico de la modernidad,” Dussel develops the concept of Westernization, its origins and repercussions. By ‘Westernization,’ he understands the term to be the global propagation
of the European paradigm as the apogee of the entire world. Nothing could compare to Europe, and as such, Europeans thought it necessary to propagate and universalize its episteme around the world.

Westernization had profound effects on countries, regions, continents and people around the world. It reconfigured political, cultural, linguistic, religious, philosophical and economic paradigms of particular regions. Dussel explores Eurocentrism in modern philosophy from an alternative locus of enunciation as opposed to a Eurocentric one. He contrasts two prominent figures of modern philosophy, René Descartes and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, with the first individuals to critique modernity as they saw it, Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala and Bartolomé de las Casas. This comparison allows Dussel to critique the Eurocentrism that permeates the canon of modern philosophy. What happens then to modern philosophy, according to our author, is that the domain becomes another axis through which coloniality of power and knowledge manifests itself. It becomes one more way to establish hierarchies and ‘legitimate’ the exploitation of conquered lands and peoples.

For example, Dussel demonstrates how Hegel’s work is Eurocentric and colonial in its nature. For Hegel, history, religion, art and philosophy reach their apex in Northern Europe—the zenith of civilization. There is no other civilization that compares to the majesty of the region. Take for example Hegel’s classification of religion in *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*, as Dussel explains it. For Hegel, there are three moments in the history of religion: a) “natural religion” (“primitive,” Chinese, Buddhist, Syrian and Persian religions, b) “religions of spiritual individuality” (Judaism, Greek and Roman
religions) and the “absolute religion (Christianity)” (Dussel 320). Dussel comments that “The Orient is always preparatory, infantile, it provides the ‘first steps.’ The ‘Germanic’ world (‘Northern’ Europe) is the end of history” (Dussel 320). Such a classification embodies Eurocentrism in its intent to classify and order the world according to geographies and knowledges.

The consequences of Eurocentrism are profound given the colonization of the majority of the world. Dussel charges Hegel with being an accomplice to the imperial project. “In no way does Hegel imagine in his northern European ignorance the world geopolitical cataclysm that had been produced since the end of the 15th century in all the cultures on Earth (in the Far East, Southeast Asia, India, sub-Saharan Africa and Amerindia by the European invasion of the ‘fourth continent’ (Dussel 322). What Dussel underlines here is the intersection between geopolitics, power and knowledge. Hegel contributes to a myriad of techniques that privileged Northern Europe over the rest of the world. Like the German philosopher, it appears that Darío is privileging European history over others. While in this case, Darío may have the benefit of the doubt for simply choosing to include European history rather than indigenous histories, his framework is a Eurocentric one. Later on when we arrive to the his understanding of the geopolitical relationships between Latin America and Europe, we will see that Darío’s perspective is akin to Hegel, where Latin America is infantile and Europe, mature.

Nevertheless, within the context of Central America, Darío uses the West as an example to show that the tensions between and within populations, empires and nations have always existed. Darío’s newspaper articles reveal the geopolitical and national
controversies that existed in Central America during his life. At the beginning of the 19th century, Central America found itself in a precarious situation. Guatemala and El Salvador found themselves facing another geopolitical intervention. Mexico annexed Guatemala and El Salvador in 1821, claiming, on the two countries’ behalf, independence from Spain. Yet, Guatemala and El Salvador did not see it the same way as their northern neighbors. Mexico became another invader like the Spanish. Subsequently, Guatemala and El Salvador broke from Mexico, and in 1825, the five Central American nations—Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica—formed the first Central American union, known as the Federation of Central America. This republic would be relatively short lived with its dissolution 13 years later. However, the desire for a united Central America did not die with the federation. The 19th century would see other attempts from the Liberal Party at uniting Central America once again (Pérez-Brignoli 66-76). One of these attempts occurred at the end of the century with Rubén Darío involved in the calls for unification.

*La Unión* was founded with the sole purpose of propagating pro-unification information. Darío’s strategy within the two articles mentioned above—“La Unión” y “Prólogo a un folleto político”—was to frame the unification within an inclusionary/exclusionary framework. This binary division is much like the dichotomies we see in the strategies of coloniality. Even so, in the case of Darío, his call is not exclude or to separate, but rather to include. He sees the unification process as a chance for peace and stability in the region. “Only hope has remained, sustained by the majority of Central American patriots, of reestablishing unity in favor of peace and by means of
sanely meditated stipulations, eradicated of susceptibilities, daughters, if one wants, of the isolation in which we have lived” (Darío, *Crónica política* 27). The isolation to which Darío is referring is Central America’s separation from the rest of the world. In the prologue to the political pamphlet, Darío states that the great nations of the period have ignored any possible relationships with the isthmus, whether they be commercial, industrial or scientific ones. To remedy this problem, the people of Central America must “join together and strengthen in progress and good” (Darío, *Crónica política* 34). What we can gather from Darío’s argument here is that the unification of Central America will foster Central America’s entrance into the world economy.

As we read previously, scholars like Julio Ramos and Ángel Rama discuss Latin America’s entrance into the world economy and its results—rapid modernization and socio-cultural transformations. Thus, if we are to read between the lines, Darío is establishing Central American unity in a causal relationship with a rapid modernization. To unify is to modernize. In this sense, the calls for unification extend beyond the national boundaries of the five Central American nations and seek interpellation into the world market. We come to the conclusion that Darío sees Central American unification as an economically beneficial enterprise for the people of the region. Yet, the benefit depends on ‘great’ nations. We might be wondering what these ‘great’ nations are? We begin answering this question by exploring further geopolitical divisions within Latin America.

Returning to Darío’s autobiography, after denied the opportunity to study in Europe due to his ‘irreverent’ poetry read to the president of Nicaragua, Darío found
himself leaving the country shortly after his incident in Managua. Left without governmental support, he headed south for Valparaíso, Chile. Once there, he wrote for several newspapers, *El Mercurio, La Época, El Heraldo* and *La Nación*. The country presented him with opportunities to cultivate his poetry while economically sustaining himself through his positions at the various newspapers (Darío, *Autobiografía* 19-34). In a letter to Luis Orrego Luco, Darío explains that he has fond memories of Chile. For him, Chile was a place where he “learned to solidify his character and to live from his intelligence” (Darío, *Epistolario selecto* 54). It was also the place where he published his *Azul* in 1888. What we can gather from this letter is that, for Darío, Chile was a place where he “passed some of the most delightful hours of his life” (*Epistolario selecto* 54). Darío concludes the letter writing, “This letter, my dear Lucho, goes as a intimate greeting, since the national greeting was written a while back in my “[Epic] Song to the glories of Chile”” (*Epistolario selecto* 54). There is no doubt that Darío praised Chile in the poem. He even calls Chile “my second country” in the dedication to Chilean President José Manuel Balmaceda (Darío, *Canto épico...* 5). Yet, Darío’s impetus for writing the poem was financial gain and notoriety as Edelberto Torres explains. One of Darío’s friends in Chile encouraged him to enter a literary contest. What Darío submitted was “Canto épico a las glorias de Chile” (Torres 109-110). Whatever Darío’s motives for writing praises of Chile, he found the country to be a place where he could further foster his literary career and a “model and glory of Hispanic American nations” (Darío, *Crónica política* 197).
In one of his chronicles “Chile,” we find more information about Darío’s high regard for Chile. The chronicle is found in Darío’s *Prosa política* in which he gives an overview of each Latin American nation. In Chile’s case, he sees the country as one of the most intellectually, militarily and commercially developed nations in Latin America. He details the social, political, commercial and geographical aspects of the country. Take for example, his description of Chile’s society. He writes: “Chile has sustained itself in the tidy hold of its ‘elite,’ in the advent of an executive aristocracy and a people deeply possessed of pride of their nationality. The *mestización* [miscegenation] filled the fiber of the people, that has conserved the indomitability of the Araucano” (Darío, *Prosa política* 67). Later, this mention of Chile’s social stratification will become important in our understanding of Darío’s relationship with coloniality of power. Nevertheless, Darío’s view on Chile’s geopolitical role in Latin America and the rest of the world helps us delve into his subjectivity. Darío believes Chile to be country with domination potential. “Chile is a eminently dominating country, it was born for that; for Chile, the action that drives conquest is essential; it is proud of its strength” (Darío, *Prosa política* 69). In other words, for Darío, Chile will be an imperial nation. All it lacks is a bit of experience in using its force, according to our author. Force against whom we may ask? Darío never specifies, but he does state that Chile is a strong nation in “our America,” aligning the country within a Latin American geopolitical alliance (*Prosa política* 70). Yet, Darío portrays Chile having a good relationship with Europe, receiving credit from English banks and maintaining a positive image in Europe. “In Europe, Chile has been respected
with great consideration” (Darío, Prosa política 64). For Darío, Chile is one of Latin America’s powerhouses at the end of the 19th century and into the 20th.

In another chronicle “La obra de populacho,” we find more of Darío’s praise for Chile, but he writes the short account for a different reason. Our author is concerned with the strikes and protests by the middle and lower classes, and it is his opinion that may give reason for Rufino Blanco-Fombona calling him conservative. Darío argues that the protests upset the political stability of the nation along with Chile’s commerce and industries. Regarding the masses and their protests, Darío writes this:

In this last population, the excesses have gone above all moderation. It has been a small Commune. How bad the apostles of false economic doctrines are making it! The example of strikes, that if they are correct in being in places where the worker converts in a pariah, are absurd in countries like Chile, where, if it is certain that the division of social classes are well defined, the laborer and the worker enjoy advantages and powers that would fill laborers and workers of [other] nations with pride. (Darío, Crónica política 206)

This passage leaves little to infer. Here, Darío clearly speaks out against the protests and criticizes the masses’ attempts for better working and living conditions. He does not blame the companies’ management and practices for the discontent; rather, he places the blame squarely on the presence of socialism in Chile. Here, the references to the ‘commune’ later followed by ‘false economic doctrines’ leave little doubt on whom or what Darío is placing the responsibility. At this point, and with good reason, we may be
thinking that Darío is pro capitalism, and perhaps, even elitist. The same passage seems to indicate that our poet does not have any qualms against social stratification. If anything, he points out that the social strata are well defined in Chile—a country where, according to him, laborers at least have it better than workers in other countries.

Now, our task lies in attempting to understand Darío’s positionality and locus of enunciation in this example. I think we can say with certainty that Darío falls within a logic of coloniality and is Eurocentric in his thinking. If we remember from chapter one, in Quijano’s analysis of social class, we learned that Linnaeus’ classificatory system of organisms resulted in the naturalization of social class, mainly based on phenotype. In other words, science tells us that social division is as natural as different sexes in plants. Yet, Darío’s chronicle is absent of any racial reference. We cannot say for certain that Darío is associating race with class. What we can note though, regarding coloniality and social class, are the colonial dichotomies between wealth/poverty and control/obedience. The relationship between these two dichotomies depends on the control of labor, or production. From this relationship, those who control labor and production reap the benefits of the laborers’ work. For Quijano, this hierarchical relationship metamorphosed from previous aristocratic and monarchical paradigms. He writes that “the only differences that are perceived among Europeans as really significant—once the hierarchies of the nobility abolished by the French Revolution—refers to wealth/poverty and control/obedience” (Quijano, “Colonialidad del poder y clasificación social” 365). In this sense, Quijano argues that social class is a European invention based on “Eurocentric naturalist, positivist and positive-Marxist theory” (Quijano, “Colonialidad del poder y
clasificación social” 365). Hence, we see how Quijano imbibes social class with coloniality.

In Darío’s chronicle we see a similar relationship between control of labor and wealth. His problem refers to the discontent of the workers. In Chile’s case, Darío rather sees obedience among the working class than protest and defiance. In other words, workers should submit to the Eurocentric relationship of production and control of labor, and when they do not, Darío sees it as unwarranted violence that should be avoided, as María Beatrice Lenzi states in her essay “Ilusión y desencanto en las crónicas de fin de siglo de Rubén Darío.” “All violence for Darío is incomprehensible, but the violence that emerges from below, the violence of workers— and as it will be seen later, the violence of black—, produces disgust for him” (Lenzi 466). Thus, from this example, we encounter a Darío who is fully engaged with Eurocentrism and who repeats the Eurocentric framework of control of labor and production.

Like Chile, Argentina was another Latin American country for which Darío held great admiration. His poetic chronicle “A la Argentina” reveals best the writer’s opinion of the country and its role within Latin America. Because the chronicle is not well known within the corpus of his work, it is worth quoting it here in its entirety.

Heart of America and arm of the American future. Owner of May’s sun. Mother of fighters, homeland of hearts. Earth in which the seeds of the future germinate. Immense Pampa where the sun expands and herds, wheat, the ostrich and the colt have their existence. Bronze matron that you had your liberty through blood and iron. Fecund and mysterious
protector of the races of the world, that you put in each one of them your autochthonous seed. Commodore of the white and blue flag, that in the squadron of America you show your sun in front of all the stars. Glory and love for you, oh, motherland Argentina! A gallop of new Pegasi, announcing triumphs, was born from the Latin nations, and your workers work in the sowing of cities and ideas. You have had the lucky charm that has kept away war. You have been able to oppose the Yankee eagle, the condor. And your beautiful blood, oh, Argentina!, communicates its rhythm to the vibrating of the whole Continent. The Statue of Liberty is erected in front of Cyclopean New York: the pretense of Latin America’s future life should raise itself, triumphant, in front of Buenos Aires. Like in the melting pot, gold, in you blood and the thoughts of all people are purified. Like in the Pampa, the colt, in your sky the free Pegasus flies. And the city of dreams to come will be Buenos Aires. Such it is the children of Vision hope; such is it the absent of Hope away; such is it the citizens and the workers of Atlantis watch. Glory through the colors of your flag. Glory through the strength of your history and through San Martín, Belgrano and Moreno. Love to you, nation of America’s nations. Love to you, because you are our continental champion. Because in you the saintly Latin vitality breathes. And because in your palpitations, oh heart of America!—as much as if it were a Pythagorean rhythm—, I
believe I hear the music of the future universe. (Darío, *Crónica política*

161-163)

Reading this chronicle, we question its place in *Crónica política* given its poetic tone and prevalent imagery. Yet, this poetic prose represents Argentina as the future of Latin America. It is the flagship country of Latin America that best counters the imperialistic intents and power of the United States. The text is an overt reference to the geopolitical tension between the North and the South.

Argentina is Latin America’s best representation of modernity, and what we see here is Darío’s faith in the continual growth and development of Latin America in the world-system. The future of Argentina is bright, such that, in Darío’s opinion, it acts a counterweight to the United States. The country represents the positive results of decolonization. If we think back to Quijano’s definitions of modernity, we remember he discussed two notions of modernity: modernity as liberation and modernity as coloniality. I think we could say that Darío addresses the idea of liberating modernity in his praise for Argentina. Let’s remind ourselves that Quijano stated that, after the colonization of America, Europe saw new possibilities emerge with the economic world-system. Europe could move past its feudal past and explore new social relationships founded in capitalism. In this sense, modernity represented new forms of autonomy. Now if we take this idea of modernity and apply it to the case of Argentina as Darío explains it, we find that Argentina does not move beyond its feudal past, but rather, according to our poet, Argentina moves beyond its colonial past—colonial, in the political sense—and continues to do so, confronting the threats of United States imperialism in Latin America.
For Darío, Argentina is Latin America’s anchor of autonomy—the nation best equipped to fight imperialism. In this way, we see a Darío preoccupied with decolonization, or at least, Latin America’s autonomy. The southern cone—both Chile and Argentina—, for Darío, turns out Latin America’s best chance to fight imperialism and for Latin America’s future.

**North/South/East/West: Darío’s “Latin Union” as Counterweight to U.S. Imperialism**

We encounter Darío’s strongest anti-imperialistic, anti-colonial sentiment in his works that engage the United States. We might say that his most political works are the ones that address the United States’ imperialistic threats, and for this reason, we see a strong geopolitical division between the North and the South in the Western hemisphere. Coming from Central America, Darío was exposed to the United States’ interventionist policies from a young age. The United States’ interest stemmed from the construction of a transoceanic canal between the Pacific and the Atlantic. We know today that the canal is found in Panama, but before its construction there, the United States was eyeing Nicaragua as the site for the canal.

One of Darío’s chronicles details this historic moment. We may expect Darío to be vehemently opposed to the construction, but, as we note in Darío’s chronicle “El canal de Nicaragua,” Darío does not see this intervention as necessarily a detrimental one to Central America’s future. Instead, he sees the canal’s presence as a benefit to Central America’s development. He writes: It is clear that the issue of much importance should
interest all the Governments of Central America, because the opening of the Isthmus inter-oceanic waterway will bring with it immeasurable progress for the five Republics” (Darío, *Crónica política* 39). Darío is pleased to hear U.S. President Benjamin Harrison’s desire to make the project a reality. Our author even goes so far to say that he is confident the construction will occur given that “the American man, enterprising of his own accord, has in himself the strength and virtue of labor and the power of gold in order to carry to completion the tasks that he designs and begins” (Darío, *Crónica política* 40).

Thus, the representation of Latin America’s northern neighbor is exactly that, a neighbor—a country whose presence is welcomed and beneficial. In this case, the United States’ capitalistic desire is a positive one. However, by and large, this chronicle remains on the other side of the spectrum when it comes to Darío’s opinion of the United States.

There are many references in Darío’s writings where he vehemently opposes the United States and its policies. For example, in the chronicle “Bronce al soldado Juan,” we learn of the United States’ intervention in Central America, much to the dismay of our author. “Bronce al soldado Juan” is a political eulogy for Juan Santamaría—a Costa Rican soldier killed in action in 1891 while defending Central America against the U.S. intervention led by William Walker. He calls the fight against William Walker and Walker’s Nicaraguan sympathizers the “most noble campaign” and praises Juan Santamaría for his defense of Central American liberty (Darío, *Crónica política* 154).

What concerns Dario is that the North will culturally, linguistically and even geographically colonize Latin America. Take as another example, an undated letter to Darío’s Argentine friend and fellow author Manuel Ugarte. In the letter, Darío explains
that he does not have “the wish to be a Yankee” (Darío, *Epistolario selecto* 67). He expresses this sentiment because he believes that Nicaragua will become “a North American dependency,” and as such, he would like to leave his position as Nicaragua’s diplomat to Spain (Darío, *Epistolario selecto* 67). Darío writes Ugarte to tell him of his desire to become an Argentine citizen. For Darío, Argentina has been his “intellectual homeland,” and he prefers “the Sun of the South over the Stars of the North” (Darío, *Epistolario selecto* 67). Darío’s statement not only exposes his repulsion for the United States but also highlights the geopolitical divide between the United States and Argentina—the powerhouse of the North and the heavy weight of the South. He opts for “our America” over “Caliban” in the North. His choice reaffirms his optimistic view of Argentina’s future. Yet, he cannot forget the northern threat and cannot help stop himself from addressing this threat.

A chronicle published in 1898 titled “El triunfo de Calibán” might be his most overtly geopolitical work. He writes the chronicle just a short time after a *Club español* sponsored event at La Victoria theater in Buenos Aires where future Argentine president Roque Saenz Peña, French-Argentine writer Paul Groussac and Italian-Argentine José Tarnassi gave speeches that protested the United States’ aggression in the Spanish American War (Jáuregui 442-443). The speeches seem to be the impetus for Dario’s penning of his own opinion of the United States, and within the first two sentences of the work, we reads Dario’s opinion loud and clear. “No, no I cannot, I do not want to be a part of those silver-teethed buffaloes. They are my enemies, they are haters of Latin blood, they are Barbarians” (Darío, *Escríotos inéditos* 160). With these two sentences, he
draws a line in the sand, separating Latin America and the United States. In his criticism of the United States, we can trace various reasons for his disdain. For him, the United States is home to (1) a materialist, consumer culture overtaken by capitalist ambition, (2) a spiritually devoid society that ignores and marginalizes its own authors and poets and (3) a government whose politics push an agenda of cultural, linguistic and economic imperialism (i.e. colonization). In his criticism of the United States, we find two particular aspects remarkable. The first is that, like Martí, Darío pushes for a unification of Latin America. For Darío, he calls it the “Latin Union.” The second remarkable aspect is that, different from Martí, Darío’s “Latin Union” includes the nations with Latin roots: Spain, France and Italy. I develop these two aspects in our discussion below about Darío’s three criticisms of the “Cyclopes” to the north.

The results of North American modernization makes our author weary of the future. U.S. materialism and consumerism coupled with imperialism leaves Darío calling for a “Latin Union” to resist the ever expanding monster to the north. In his criticism, he attempts to portray North Americans as barbaric. “It appeared to me to feel the oppression of a mountain, I felt breathe, in a country of Cyclopes, eaters of raw meat, bestial blacksmiths, inhabitants of mastodons’ houses. Colored, heavy, vulgar, they go through the streets pushing each other and grazing each other animal-like, to the hunt for the dollar. The ideal of those Calibans is circumscribed to the stock market and factory” (Darío, Escritos inéditos 160). Here, Darío situates materialism into the framework of coloniality. By this I mean that he uses Eurocentric dualities to establish a value judgment on United States culture. He equates materialistic and capitalist values with
barbarism. Within the web of coloniality, we remember the duality ‘civilized/barbaric’ as one of the tools to subordinate non-Europeans to Europeans. Dario uses this duality to chain the following three terms together: barbaric—capitalist—United States. The result is the construction of difference that separates Latin America from the United States, or the South from the North. Even so, Dario is unsettled by the power the U.S. wields around the globe and the arrogance that accompanies this power. He accuses them of having an imperial eye. “They look at us, from the tower of their shoulders, to those of us who do not engorge ourselves with steak and do not say all right, as inferior beings” (Dario, Escritos inéditos 160). Couldn’t we say that this an example of double consciousness? In this instance, he is describing the other’s view of his own subjectivity and the subjectivities geographically linked to Latin America. He has his own self-image but is familiar with his other self-image as constructed by the other.

He continues his criticism of the United States as a spiritually devoid culture consumed by the logic of capitalism. Yet, we must note that for Dario, not all aspects of U.S. culture are detrimental. As some of his poetic works demonstrate, he admired Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Mark Twain and Edgar Allan Poe. In particular, he held a special affinity for Poe and includes the author in his book Los raros and even writes the prologue to a Spanish translation of Poe’s “The Raven.”32 So when Dario criticizes the United States, he makes sure to exclude these North American authors from his disparagement. “Enemies of all ideality, they are in their apoplectic, perpetual mirrors of growth; but their Emerson well skilled he is like Carlyle’s moon; their Whitman with his verses to axe, he is a democratic prophet, to the use of Uncle Sam; and their Poe, their
grand Poe, a poor swan drunk from sorrows and alcohol, was the martyr of his dream in a country where he will never be understood” (Dario, Escritos inéditos 160). To Dario, these writers have something in common with him. They use the poetic as a counter-narrative to the dominant ones of materialism and capitalism. Take for example, what Dario says about Poe. He calls Poe a swan drunk from pain and alcohol and even a martyr. The swan is a common modernist symbol for beauty. But, he is a neglected swan in a country whose inhabitants are interpolated within a logic of capitalism rather than a logic of poetics. We find this detail important because it underscores the flows of knowledge and the coloniality of it. Even within United States, alternative knowledges, even religion, are subordinated to a knowledge dictated by capitalism, consumption and materialism. “They have temples for all the gods and they do not believe in one” (Dario, Escritos inéditos 160). For Dario, capitalism crushes any form of spirituality (in the poetic and religious senses). It colonizes North Americans’ minds, save the few misunderstood, lonely poets hidden among masses.

Nonetheless, what scares our poet is the United States’ political might on a global scale. Their insatiable appetite for more territory threatens any perceived form of autonomy that Latin America has. The fight for territory in the Spanish-American war unsettles our poet. While Dario’s works point to his support for Cuban independence from both Spain and the United States, we come to understand that he much rather have Spain’s presence in the region than the English-speaking nation. Referring to the U.S., he writes: “No, I cannot be on the side of them, I cannot be for the triumph of Caliban. That is why my soul filled with happiness the other night, when three men representative
of our race went to protest in a solemn and pleasant party, as a result of Yankee aggression towards the noble and today overwhelmed Spain” (Darío, “El triunfo” 161). Darío’s plan to combat this “Yankee aggression” is to unite the countries of Latin ancestry: the nations of Latin America, Spain, France and Italy. The event at La Victoria theater embodies Darío’s plan. In the chronicle, he emphasizes that Groussac and Tarnassi spoke on the behalf of France and Italy, respectively. Thus Darío concludes that “[i]n such a way, our race should unite, like one unites in soul and heart, in troubled times; we are the sentimental race, but we have been also the proprietors of force” (Escritos inéditos 162). Such a union would counter what Darío perceives is an alliance between England and the United States. Now, the question we have before us is Darío’s use of race. Is he using race in the same vein that Quijano uses it, meaning race as determined by phenotype? Judging from his use of the term, race refers to an assembly of cultural, political, ideological, philosophical, linguistic, religious and economic manifestations. Hence, we see Darío’s references to the “sentimental” race and a race that knows how to dominate.

However, we cannot discard coloniality of power/knowledge just yet in this example. Darío’s chronicle portrays Latin America as an extension of Europe, in particular, Spain, France and Italy. Anything indigenous is ignored and buried under Darío’s proposed geopolitical alliance. To argue for such alliance, Darío is implying a certain cultural, political, ideological, linguistic, economic and religious homogeneity between Latin America and Europe. We know that in the case of Latin America—as put forth by many Latin Americans scholars like José Joaquin Brunner and Néstor García
Canclini—that the region is far from homogenous.\textsuperscript{34} Thus, coloniality of power/knowledge emerges in Darío’s text in the form of Eurocentrism. Darío portrays Latin America as an extension of its former colonizers in order to propose his “Latin Union.” Darío’s proposal is much like Martí’s proposal in “Our America,” but the difference remains in who is invited to the table. Martí’s “Our America” envisions a united and autonomous Latin America whereas Darío uses Latin America’s colonial legacy to propose his geopolitical alliance with the three nations in Europe. Even so, we look at the title of Darío’s chronicle we do not immediately think of Martí’s “Our America” but rather José Enrique Rodó’s \textit{Ariel}.

Published in 1900—two years after Darío’s chronicle—, Rodó’s work implores Latin American youth to not follow the same path that the United States did in forging a national identity. To argue his point that Latin Americans should instead follow a spiritual route in the formation of a national identity, he appropriates characters from Shakespeare’s \textit{The Tempest}, Ariel (Latin America) and Caliban (the United States). Rodó criticizes utilitarianism, materialism and North American democracy. Like Darío’s work, there is a geopolitical aligning with Europe. There are striking similarities between Rodó and Darío’s respective works that fall out of the scope of this chapter, but like Darío’s, Rodó’s discourse is Eurocentric and relays a preoccupation that Latin America will becomes \textit{unlatinized} as a result of \textit{nordomanía}.\textsuperscript{35} So both authors conclude that Latin America is better off as Ariel than Caliban. Darío writes: “Miranda will always prefer Ariel; Miranda is the grace of the spirit; all the mountains of stone, of iron, of gold
and of bacon, will not be enough for my Latin soul to prostitute itself to Caliban ("El triunfo" 162). Dario will never be bought by the United States.

_East/West: Dario’s Tenuous Relationship with Europe_

Up until this point I have talked about the dualities that Dario uses to establish difference, and we have seen in chapter one how Quijano explains the construction of Eurocentrism and coloniality of power/knowledge, but how do we understand Dario’s construction of difference? Even if it a difference used to push back against imperialism or colonialism, is it colonial? And what happens when the difference is constructed between two imperial powers—the United States and Spain—where both countries are fighting over a territory, like Cuba? For Walter Mignolo, he demarcates two types of difference in his book _The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options_: imperial difference and colonial difference. Both of these forms of difference stem from what Carl Schmidt calls “global linear thinking.” By “global linear thinking,” Schmidt refers to Europe’s claim on the rest of the world and its imperial intent in dividing the territories among European nations. For Quijano, global linear thinking would be Eurocentric thinking. Mignolo tells us that global linear thinking arose during the modern/colonial period as a result of Europe’s need for a method to hierarchize and classify territories, peoples and knowledges.

Just to make sure we know what Schmidt and Mignolo mean by the global linear thinking, let’s take one example that Mignolo gives. In the 16th century, Pope Alexander
VI divided the world longitudinally to settle a territorial dispute between the Spanish and the Portuguese. This settlement between the two empires became known as the Treaty of Tordesilla. What we see in this example are two European empires declaring the rest of the world their own. The pope, within a framework of global linear thinking also, comes up with the settlement. While, at a glance, the treaty seems to only address a territorial dispute, upon a further analysis, the pope’s decision also affects the flow of knowledges. Particular regions would experience Spanish colonization and other regions, Portuguese colonization. Thus, the different colonized regions would be exposed to similar yet distinctive cultural, political, religious, economic and ideological paradigms. In other words, global linear thinking involves the intersection between geographies and knowledges. Such thinking “mapped not only the land and waters of the planet but also the minds” (Mignolo, *Darker Side of Western Modernity* 79). Mapping minds included the construction of imperial and colonial difference.

Imperial difference is the difference that exists within dominant empires or nations, or, as Quijano would call it, within the coloniality of power/knowledge. The conflict between Spain and Portugal represents this type of difference. According to Mignolo, imperial difference was established within Europe in the 16th century. Again, take for example, Spain and Portugal. Both established the conditions from which they could subjugate all other forms of knowledge and epistemologies. This idea is not new. Others like Quijano and Santiago Castro-Gómez have examined the relationship between Eurocentrism, epistemology and hierarchy. For example, as we learn from Mignolo in his work, Castro-Gómez uses the term “zero point” to demonstrate a linear and
hierarchical organization of different epistemologies. By “zero point,” he means the hierarchization and classification of epistemologies that privilege one over all others. In his La hybris del punto cero, Castro-Gómez writes “that the zero point is the point of absolute epistemological beginning, but also the point of economic and social control over the world. Locating oneself in the zero point is equivalent to having the power to institute, represent, to represent, to construct a vision over the social and natural world that is recognized as legitimate and guaranteed by the State” (25). Thus, Mignolo uses Castro-Gómez’s concept to explain the birth of imperial and colonial difference. “The zero point is the site of observation from which the epistemic colonial differences and the epistemic imperial differences are mapped out” (Mignolo, Darker Side of Western Modernity 80). The other type of difference, colonial difference, also results from global linear thinking. Colonial difference refers to the methods used to establish difference between Europeans and colonized subjects. Racial classification and hierarchization were some of the fundamental methods used to establish colonial difference and reinforce global linear thinking. In dialogue with Quijano’s works, we can say that colonial difference depends on social classification vis-à-vis race and instrumental reason to subjugate non-European subjects. At this point, having both imperial and colonial difference in mind, let’s return to Dario’s “El triunfo de Calibán” to examine the manner in which he presents difference (and unity) between Europe and Latin America.

For Dario, Latin America’s history begins on the other side of the Atlantic, and in his works, an appreciation of (even loyalty towards) Spain emerges; even so, he is careful to demarcate to what extent his appreciation and loyalty for Spain is. For
example, he sides with Spain in the Spanish-American War. “I am a friend of Spain at the moment I see it attacked by a brutal enemy, who carries out, like it teaches, violence, force and injustice” (Dario, *Escritos inéditos* 162). For Dario, Spain is nothing like the United States. It is not the “curial fanatic, nor the pedant, nor the unhappy, disdainful American schoolmaster who doesn’t know” (Dario, *Escritos inéditos* 162). His appreciation of Spain mostly centers on its cultural production over the centuries. As he puts it, “The Spain I defend is called Gentlemanliness, Ideal, Nobility; it is called Cervantes, Quevedo, Góngora, Gracián, Velázquez; it is called the Cid, Loyola, Isabel; it is called Rome’s Daughter, France’s Sister and America’s Mother” (Dario, *Escritos inéditos* 162). First, we note our poet’s geopolitical alliance between the Italy, Spain and France—all sharing a common linguistic trait. Not only does Dario repeat his “Latin Union” proposal here, he follows a logic of coloniality of power/knowledge by calling Spain Latin America’s mother, which implies a temporal distortion between the histories of Latin America and Spain and negates indigenous histories and epistemes.37 Though, it is worth emphasizing that Dario considers Spain the daughter of Rome. With such classification of the countries within a familial framework, we see a flow of knowledge and power from Rome—Spain—Latin America. This flow of knowledge starting with Rome is what Dussel pointed out in his reading of Hegel’s Eurocentric view of history, or as Mignolo and Castro-Gómez would say, Europe is the “zero point” for Dario.

Once again, we find a Dario imprisoned within a matrix of coloniality. Second, we note Dario use of a Eurocentric duality in his description of Spain. This duality—‘civilized/barbaric’—as part of instrumental reason, is an attempt to construct colonial
difference.38     If  the  United  States  is   full  of  barbarians,  Cyclopes   and  Calibans,  Spain  is  
the   opposite,   full   of   hidalgos   and   nobility²a   seemingly   perfect   example   of   colonial  
difference.    Nonetheless,  our  example  of  colonial  difference  is  more  complicated  than  it  
appears.      First,   we   need   to   consider   the   locus   of   enunciation.      The   enunciation   is   not  
coming  from  Spain,  or  Europe  for  that  matter;;  it  emerges  from  Latin  America.    Second,  
we  must  rememEHUWKDW'DUtR¶VUHDIILUPDWLRQRUH[DOWDWLRQRI(XURSHLVQRWWREHOLWWOHRU
VXERUGLQDWH /DWLQ $PHULFD EXW UDWKHU WR FULWLTXH WKH 8QLWHG 6WDWHV¶ GRPLQDQFH DQG
hegemony.    Thus,  Darío  uses  colonial  difference  in  an  attempt  to  subordinate  the  United  
States.    In  the  15th,  16th  and  17th  centuries,  Europe  used  colonial  difference  to  distinguish  
between  Europeans  and  non-­(XURSHDQVRUWKHJHRSROLWLFDOD[LV³(DVW:HVW´,Q'DUtR¶V
case,  we  see  another  division  that  changes  the  former  relationship  between  the  East  and  
WKH :HVW DQG FRORQLDO GLIIHUHQFH D JHRSROLWLFDO GLYLVLRQ ³1RUWK6RXWK´   'DUtR XVHV
colonial  difference  to  align  Latin  America  with  Europe  (the  West)  in  order  to  combat  the  
8QLWHG 6WDWHV WKH 1RUWK  KHQFH 'DUtR¶V ³/DWLQ 8QLRQ´  7KH FRORQLDOLW\ RI  
SRZHUNQRZOHGJH KDV VKLIWHG IURP (XURSH WR WKH 8QLWHG 6WDWHV  'DUtR¶V XVH RI WKH
GXDOLW\ ³FLYLOL]HGEDUEDULF´ SRUWUD\V 6SDLQ LQ D SRVLWLYH OLJKW ZKLOH WKH 8QLWHG 6WDWHV LV
represented  in  a  negative  one.    Perhaps  the  best  way  to  understand  this  example  is  to  use  
WKH ROG DGDJH ³ILJKW ILUH ZLWK ILUH´  'DUtR XVHV FRORQLDO GLIIHUHQFH WR ILJKW FRORQLDO
difference,   or,   to   say   it   another   way,   he   uses   coloniality   to   fight   coloniality.      As  
paradoxical  as  it  may  seem,  his  defense  strategy  against  the  United  States  requires  Latin  
$PHULFD¶V UHWXUQ WR LWV PRWKHU DQG JUDQGPRWKHU 6SDLQ DQG 5RPH UHVSHFWLYHO\  /HW¶V
H[SORUH'DUtR¶VRSLQLRQRQ(XURSHDELWIXUWKHU  
125  
  


Darío holds Spain in high regard and shares the same sentiment for many of Spain’s Generación del 98. As we have already seen, he celebrates Spain’s literary tradition and sees Latin America as Spain’s offspring. Even so, the current state of Spain during Darío’s time was a cause of concern for him. In the chronicles “El crepúsculo de España” and “España de afuera,” Darío explains some of Spain’s ailments and defends the country amidst negative representations of it. Darío’s objective in “El crepúsculo de España” is to state his solidarity with Spain over the United States and calls for its reemergence as a powerful nation in the world, especially given his disdain for the world’s new emerging superpower. “My affection has been for that impoverished and fallen illustrious monarchy; my disdain, for a rosy-cheeked democracy, that takes advantage of its apoplectic body and Cyclopean appetite” (Darío, Escritos inéditos 163). We note Darío’s geopolitical alliance once again. Still, Darío points out that not every Latin American writer or intellectual shares a similar sentiment towards Spain. He writes that some shrug off Spain as useless and old, but he does not, especially when he sees “the Yankee shredding it into pieces” (Darío, Escritos inéditos 163). But it is Spain’s shredding to pieces that is the impetus for Darío’s chronicle. He encourages Spain to find “new life” and recommends a process of national reconstruction—a reconstruction built upon “the old rocks of the fallen building” (Darío, Escritos inéditos 163). There is a sense of optimism in the chronicle’s tone, but when we look at “España de afuera” that tone becomes darker. Spain’s future is bleak.

According to Darío, Spain has been pigeon holed into a stereotype of a backwards nation that does not wish to modernize. He argues that France is the culprit of such a
stereotype. Darío writes in the opening paragraph that France has succeeded in transmitting an image of Spain where the country seems “static and unchangeable” (Darío, Escritos dispersos 163). Unsettled by this stereotype, our author dedicates his efforts in the chronicle to arguing on behalf of Spain and their intellectual achievements. He finds France’s claims unwarranted and untrue, as if Spain has been the victim of a smear campaign. France has propagated an antiquated image of Spain, tying Spain’s image with the Inquisition, begging, bullfighting and flamenco, according to our author. As a result, Spain’s cultural production has taken a hit. Darío writes that “Spanish and its literature do not count, it can be said, in the world-wide intellectual movement” (Darío, Escritos dispersos 165). While Spain’s marginalization upsets our author, it appears that Darío is more perturbed by the geopolitical consequences of Spain’s relegation in Europe. Darío’s geopolitical preoccupations become evident in his account of Dr. Luis H. Debayle’s presentation at an international medicine conference in Budapest in 1909. Coming from Central America, Debayle argues that Spanish be incorporated alongside English, French and German as official languages. Not only do 21 nations speak Spanish as the predominant language, Spanish “unites excellent conditions for being an international language: it is musical in its expression and easy in its learning”” (Darío, Escritos dispersos 165). Debayle proceeds to argue that Spanish even facilitates learning Latin—an important language in medicine—since the former is a derivative of the latter. Debayle’s argument underscores flows of knowledge articulated around a linguistic common denominator. Thus, while Darío has an affinity for Spain, he knows that Spain’s marginalization in Europe does not translate well for Latin America.
Darío’s defense of Spain and his fame in Europe may have salvaged Spain from complete cultural relegation. This is what María A. Salgado argues in her essay “Rubén Darío y la Generación del 98: Personas, personajes y mascaras del fin de siglo español.” Salgado claims that modernismo is characterized by its egocentrism, namely its emphasis on the poet/author and its cultivation of that subjectivity. She notes as examples the numerous biographies and autobiographies that were published during the period. We could say that Darío’s Los raros project is a clear example of this egocentrism. Part of Darío’s project was to elevate the status of Latin American, North American and European writers. Nevertheless, Salgado maintains that the Generación del 98’s popularity is the fruit of Darío’s labor. She claims that “it is precisely by highlighting the Darían vision that one can conclude that it was Darío who primarily determined as much the image that their contemporaries had of the men of the Generación as the image that we have as their actual readers” (Salgado 726).

Salgado’s argument is significant in our dealing with Darío and the coloniality of power/knowledge because we see a geopolitical reversal in cultural production. On one hand, Darío’s biographies of the Generación del 98 writers and his interest in Spain act as a form of symbolic capital that advances the status of Spanish cultural production. In other words, Spain benefits from Darío’s literary high regard around the world. Such a relationship between Europe and Latin America bucks traditional relationships of cultural production and power. It is Latin America’s notoriety (i.e. Darío) that boosts Spain’s (i.e. the writers of the Generación del 98). Yet, on the other hand, Darío’s project, at the same time, maintains the former colonial relationship between Spain and Latin America.
The colonization of Latin America and its exploitation translated into wealth and global power for Spain. In a similar vein, Latin America comes to the aid of Spain’s reputation in Europe and the world-system. Thus, while Dario is not necessarily subordinated to the writers of the Generación del 98, the flow of capital—either as primary resources or cultural capital—from Latin America to Spain does not change. Even so, Dario’s objectives in promoting the Generación del 98’s works may have been self-serving or in the best interests of Latin America. Exclusion of Spanish cultural and scientific production creates a barrier for Latin American production of knowledge given the linguistic commonality between the two regions.

While he charges France with being the culprit of Spain’s smear campaign, Dario still greatly admires the home of Victor Hugo. I think this aspect of Dario’s life we all know fairly well, since not only did Dario find himself in Paris but many other Latin American intellectuals did as well. In this autobiography, Dario explains that he always had a desire to live in Paris and surround himself with the poets and writers who congregated in this aesthetic Mecca. The cosmopolitan city offered a vibrant community for those seeking intellectual stimulation. Take what Dario says in his autobiography when he states “I dreamed of Paris, since a child, to the extent that when I prayed, I begged God to not let me die without knowing Paris. Paris was, for me, a paradise where the essence of happiness was breathed over the land. It was the city of Art, of Beauty and of Glory; and, above all, it was the capital of Love, the kingdom of fantasy” (Dario, Autobiografía 43). Dario’s desire to go to Paris at a young age surely must have come from exterior influences. For example, many pre-modernist and modernist poets ended
up in Europe. We come to find out in Dario’s later writings that from there seemed to be a beacon that beckoned Latin American intellectuals to travel across the Atlantic to the land of Verlaine and Hugo. Dario has various chronicles that speak to this phenomenon, one of them being “El deseo de Paris.” In the chronicle published in La Nación en 1912, he recounts an encounter he had with a young man in Latin America who wished to live in Paris so he could “abandon this merchant environment” (Dario Escritos dispersos 264). But already a veteran “Parisian,” Dario, playing to the young man’s naivety, is about to burst our young man’s idealism. “Ah, Paris! . . . –I answered enthusiastically—. You are going to Paris, during this beautiful age! . . . How happy you must be! . . . Would you be rich? There is no doubt . . . Your opulent father and mother will replenish your wallet well. . . In the age of illusions and enthusiasms” (Dario, Escritos dispersos 264; ellipses added by author). However, the young man is not rich. Dario’s last phrase hits close to home: “in an age of illusions and enthusiasms.” Dario had the same illusion though, as we noted above in his autobiography. Paris may sound good, but the realities can be quite different. Dario has this to say to the poor person travelling to Paris: “You will have to suffer horrible hardships. . . You will walk behind people who speak Spanish, by third class hotels, in order to achieve a day yes and thirty days no, . . . The case that you cite me are exceptional cases. . .” (Dario, Escritos dispersos 265). The realities for the literary immigrant are far from the young man’s expectations. Nevertheless, many aspiring Latin American intellectuals were willing to take their chances, buy their ticket to cross the Atlantic and see if they would win the jackpot on the other side.
Latin America’s presence in France becomes the topic for several of Darío’s chronicles: “La producción intelectual latinoamericana,” published in 1913 in Paris, “La América Latina en Europa: á propósito de la cuestión chilenoargentina,” published in Paris in 1901, and “Las letras hispanoamericanas en París,” published first in 1901 as a series of newspaper chronicles and then later published as a chapter in Darío’s *La caravana pasa*. All three texts reveal a Darío who is preoccupied with Latin America’s literary and cultural reputation and presence in Europe. What is valuable for us in our analysis of (de)coloniality and Darío’s texts is that these three chronicles begin to account for the de-colonial character of our poet. We have already seen in many instances how Darío is anything but de-colonial. I mean, he praises Europe, looks to them as the progenitors of Latin America and even wants to reunite with them to counter U.S. imperialism. But, a uni-directional flow of knowledge, that is, from Europe to Latin America, becomes a source of anxiety for Darío. Take what he says in the first sentence of his “La América Latina en Europa: a propósito de la cuestión chilenoargentina.”

“More than one time the immense lack of knowledge has been noted, the enormous ignorance that exists in Europe and principally en this ‘sweet’ French country, with respect to Hispanic American nations” (Darío, *Crónicas desconocidas* 112). He claims that France’s ignorance is due to its egocentrism. As he puts it, there is France, and anything outside of the nation is “the rest” (Darío, *Crónicas desconocidas* 112). Darío gives as example the manner in which France acknowledges Spanish cultural production. For France, the knowledge and products that emerge from Spain are “things of Spain” (Darío, *Crónicas desconocidas* 112).
Darío’s list of complaints continues in the other chronicles as well. While it may seem redundant to give more examples, I want to stress the de-colonial character that we see in Darío’s writings because after all, Darío is, more or less, a colonial subject. In “Las letras hispanoamericanas en París,” Darío criticizes the French’s inability (or lack of desire) to differentiate between Latin America and Spain. For the French, “all the Hispanic American is confused with the clearly Spanish” (Darío, “Las letras hispanoamericanas en París” 7). Perhaps even more astounding for our poet is the marginalization of Latin American literature in France. Darío claims that no one in France is familiar with his continent’s literature, and he leads us to believe that this ignorance is not due to the Latin American presence in France, rather France’s egocentrism (or Eurocentrism). Because as our poet explains “it is important to note that a large portion of the elite of letters of our republics live today in Paris” (Darío, “Las letras hispanoamericanas en París” 7).

What Darío points out in these examples is the coloniality of power/knowledge, namely through Eurocentrism. His criticism is of the French’s notion of superiority and the relegation of all other production of knowledge. Part of Darío’s literary project is to name and detail Latin American thought. For example, his objective in “Las letras hispanoamericanas en París” is to name the Latin American authors who are or have been in Paris developing and perfecting their craft. Darío’s works that underscore Latin American writers challenge Eurocentrism, and our author knows this because, as he states, when non-French authors perfect their skill too well, France goes about trying to discredit them. “When that artist, that writer or that genius, installed in Paris, converts
into a rival, when his or her production becomes competitive to their own production, s/he will be attacked, will be demolished, or will be scorned” (Darío, “Las letras hispanoamericanas en Paris” 5). So, what is Darío’s solution, and how is it de-colonial?

First off, we need to have a working definition of de-coloniality. If the coloniality of power/knowledge is rounded off by Eurocentrism, social classification and capitalism, de-coloniality would thus be an unraveling and surmounting of these elements. Nelson Maldonado-Torres gives a clear definition of the term in his essay “On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept.” By decolonization, or put differently, de-coloniality, he refers to “a confrontation with the racial, gender, and sexual hierarchies that were put in place or strengthened by European modernity as it colonized and enslaved populations through the planet. In short, with decolonization I am thinking of oppositions to the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being . . .” (Maldonado-Torres 261).

Darío’s de-colonial aims come in the form of debasing Eurocentrism. In his chronicle “La producción intelectual latinoamericana: autores y editores,” Darío uses a recently published pamphlet published by Mr. Alcover, the head of the national archive in Havana.⁴¹ The pamphlet is a defense of Latin American writers and their interests. Darío uses Mr. Alcover’s opinion to share his own—an opinion that is very similar to Mr. Alcover’s. For Darío, Latin American literary production would be better off if authors, editors and nations could move beyond several obstacles. Three of these hindrances include the difficulty and high cost associated with publishing a book, lack of editors and books themselves and the desire for European validation of Latin American works. Take
Darío’s example of Argentina. “The Argentine authors of certain authority do not send their books to the rest of the continent, but rather with very special exceptions, because nothing interests them except the judgment of European criteria” (Darío, Escritos dispersos 345). Darío wants to refocus the intellectual gaze on Latin America from Latin America. In other words, intellectual production must break away from a Eurocentric gaze that continues relegating Latin American authors. In this way, the idea is break away from dependency on Europe for cultural models. Nevertheless, in doing so, Darío is still concerned with Latin America’s reputation, and he lists off various ways that Latin America can still fortify its continental intellectual project.

In “La América Latina en Europa: á propósito de la cuestión chilenoargentina,” Darío names three ways Latin America can improve its relationship in Europe. Diplomacy, the press and the dissemination of special works are the three methods that Darío sees best for Latin America’s future. Darío believes South America is in a precarious situation. Whereas we saw Darío argue above for the “Latin Union,” we find a Darío who is hesitant of Europe. He fears European (in particular, British) intervention in South America as articulated in an article in the National Review. According to Darío, the article replicates Europe’s opinion that South America is still a region neither politically defined nor sovereign. Put differently, Europe believes “the South American republics are, thus, edible” (Darío, “La América Latina en Europa” 114). Thus, as our author defended Latin America when confronting U.S. imperialism, he defends the South from another threat. The geopolitical division North/South becomes East/West. At this point, we may be thinking Darío is contradicting himself here. Before, he proposed a
union with Europe only to now reject it. Yet, we would be misguided to write off Darío as simply a contradictory subject whose beliefs fluctuated daily. Rather, what we see is a subject under struggle—a subject who is still on the threshold of coloniality and de-coloniality. This struggle is intimately entwined with the geopolitical stability of the region. He does not know where to look necessarily—to the North, the East or his own territory. In this case, his solution to re-colonization does not call for a Latin Union; it calls for a public relations bonanza emerging from Latin America.

The first step is diplomacy. If Europe finds South America to be a politically volatile, undeveloped region, then Latin Americans must dispel this notion. Darío’s complaint is this: “No one, generally, takes charge in making known the dignity of knowledge that is in his or her country, what can awaken interest, or attract the looks and sympathies of these peoples, to regions only known for this disadvantage sides” (Darío, Crónicas desconocidas 115). Hence, to counter negative stereotypes of Latin America, Latin Americans must circulate positive representations. The press has a role in such dissemination, which leads us to the second step: the role of the press in countering coloniality. According to Darío, Latin American newspaper companies should look beyond the region for its readership. Papers should be sent to Europe and disseminated there (Darío, Crónicas desconocidas 115-116). This solution may sound rather simple in theory, but according to our poet, the press has been one of the worst perpetrators of negative representations of Latin America, and, for Darío, one nation in particular, Guatemala. Darío rebukes the press in his chronicle “Ignorancia y malicia.” He writes that “many of the foreign Press opts for the lies and the extravagant, and under different
forms offers it to their readers . . . This occurs in Europe, where Guatemala, thanks to the fake interviewer, to the ignorant reporter, or to the greedy journalist, is a mysterious and savage country . . . it is a land of savages, where we eat each other raw” (Darío, Crónica política 71). Two ideas pop out here. First, we see the dualities emerge within the coloniality of power—a representation of Latin America as a land full of cannibals. Second, we learn more about the relationship between Eurocentrism, capitalism and commoditization of the exotic. Such representations of Guatemala promote readership and improve sales. In this way, capitalism sustains Eurocentrism through the objectification and exoticization of Latin America. Yet, for Darío, he not only sees the European press as the culprit, but also the presses in the United States and Latin America. He claims that presses in South America ignore Guatemala in their reporting and that Mexican presses criticize Guatemala in theirs (Darío, Crónica política 74). Thus, for Darío the seemingly simple task of circulating positive representations of Latin America is pinned down by capitalism, geopolitical interests and Eurocentrism. Darío’s third step in combating coloniality seeks to establish positive representations of Latin America.

The third step builds upon diplomacy and the press by propagating special works that show “the true state of progress and culture in which the republic finds itself” (Darío, Crónicas desconocidas 116). In other words, Darío wants to demonstrate that the republics of South America are modern nations. All these steps combat the dualities that established colonial difference. Yet, while they combat Eurocentrism, Darío’s solutions still fall within the larger scope of coloniality of power/knowledge. This is to say that Darío is using the discourse of modernity to assure Latin America of its autonomy from
Europe and the United States. He wants to “demonstrate the robustness of the nation, the natural treasure, the sociological evolution, the progressive achievement of light and force” (Darío, *Crónicas desconocidas* 118). Science and rationality are two domains through which the coloniality of power/knowledge manifested itself. Darío appropriates scientific discourse—positivism—to argue on behalf of Latin America. For example, terms like ‘sociological evolution’ invoke Darwinist theory. His solution also depends on the market to circulate positive representations of Latin America. In this sense, he proposes a remedy that relies on, rather than rejects, global capitalism. While his defense of Latin America is aimed particularly in the case of Latin America’s re-colonization, we can locate his locus of enunciation within a colonial matrix of power. One more example makes this claim apparent for us.

Both the immense commercial and industrial achievements, intellectual life, as precarious it may be; the acclaimed artists’ artistic thirst, who do what they can; and the absence of an ancient semi-barbaric existence in which other countries of the same continent are still full of unrest, which have created disdain, or at least indifference and oblivion in which the great civilized states have Latin America. (Darío, *Crónicas desconocidas* 118)

Darío tries to distance the current state of Latin America from its “semi-barbaric” past. He draws from the duality ‘civilized/barbaric’ trying to refute any claim that Latin America is barbaric. Yet again, in this passage, we see him underlining the commercial and industrial advancements of Latin America. Consequently, we conclude that Darío’s
de-colonial attempts, while important, still remain in the paradigm of coloniality of power/knowledge. Though, I do not know whether or not it is fair to judge Darío so harshly. In the time of his writing this chronicle, people like Paul Smith were calling for a consolidation of Latin American nations so that Europe could come over to govern the continent (Darío, *Crónicas desconocidas* 120). Darío makes mention of Paul Smith’s idea in “La América Latina en Europa: á propósito de la cuestión chilenoargentino.”

Facing such prospects, Darío’s concern was threats of re-colonization.

*Darío’s De-colonial Interrogations: Democracy, Capitalism, Nationalism*

Nevertheless, if Darío is a subject bound in the coloniality of power/knowledge, we still have not reconciled the question of imitation. Quijano said that imitation was a form of subversion. Thus, if Darío is advocating for the use of the press—that is, the circulation and consumption of thought vis-à-vis the capitalist system—and is representing Latin America as a modernized, non-barbaric region in order to achieve greater recognition and autonomy for Latin America, is he merely imitating the coloniality of power/knowledge (a propos the global capitalist system and Eurocentric dualities) in order to subvert it? Perhaps this is a question we cannot answer with certainty, but we can explore two chronicles that outright reject the coloniality of power: “¿Por qué?” y “La locura de la Guerra.” In the chronicles, Darío criticizes capitalism, exploitation and national identities. His chronicle “¿Por qué?” might be his strongest condemnation of the social consequences of modernity and the world-economy. In the
previous section of this chapter, we saw how Darío criticized the masses for revolts in “La obra del populacho,” but here we find Darío in solidarity with the same group he previously condemned. Our author is worried about the widening social stratification between the upper and lower classes, and he blames the upper class for the growing inequality. He claims that “The crooks are in possession of the Banks and stores. The factories are the martyrdom of honesty; they are not paid the salaries that the tycoons crave, and, while the unhappy soul manages to eat his hard bread, in the palaces and rich houses, the fortunate ones gorge themselves with truffles and pheasants. Each carriage that passes in the street goes squashing the heart of the poor” (Darío, *Crónica política* 127). For Darío, the increasing social stratification and social injustice is a result of capitalism. “Nothing has value anymore except miserable gold” (Darío, *Crónica política* 125). In other words, capitalism establishes and drives social relations and cultural production.

We have seen this particular complaint before in Darío’s “El rey burgués,” but we see him take the criticism a bit further. He claims that upper class’ pursuit for riches has destroyed any notion of democracy. “Isn’t it called democracy that political conundrum that the poets sing and the speakers praise? Because damn that democracy. That is not democracy, rather an insult and a wreck. The unfortunate suffers from the rain of plagues; the rich enjoy” (Darío, *Crónica política* 126). Put differently, social hierarchization based on the accumulation of capital impedes a political system that hinges itself on *demos*. Darío’s claim here expands our discussion on the coloniality of power/knowledge to include the political, and in this case, democracy. In Ramón
Grosfoguel’s article “Transmodernity, border thinking, and global coloniality: Decolonizing political economy and postcolonial studies,” he discusses the manners in which the coloniality of power/knowledge regulate and manipulate forms of democracy. For Grosfoguel, democracy cannot fully exist when the world is predicated upon the coloniality of power/knowledge. Social classification and Eurocentrism establish a socio-political hierarchy where some citizens enjoy more rights or privileges that other. One of Grosfoguel’s largest concerns with democracy is the West’s propagation of liberal democracy. According to him, “[t]he liberal form of democracy is the only one accepted and legitimated. Forms of democratic alterity are rejected” (Grosfoguel 17). Grosfoguel maintains that non-Western nations must accept liberal democracy or face harsh repercussions. He characterizes the 21st century thus far as “‘democratize or I shoot you’”—an obvious reference to the United States’ intervention in Iraq and elsewhere (Grosfoguel 17). In any case, what Grosfoguel suggests is the decolonization of liberal democracy as the only form of legitimate democracy, and by liberal democracy he means a democracy that is “western racialized and capitalist-centered” (17). Darío’s critique of the nation is similar. The socio-economic disparity that exists hinders any true form of democracy. Here, we find a de-colonial critique in Darío’s writings.

In Darío’s “La locura de la guerra,” we find a criticism of the dominant political organization of the world. Darío criticizes the concept of the nation, stating that “all contributes in the apparatus of the nation to increase and stir up human hate” (Darío, Crónica política 139). By all, he refers to particular symbols and interests present in the nation, for example, monarchical or elitist interests, national hymns and powerful towns.
or cities. For Darío, these symbols breed a love of the nation, or as he calls it, *patria*, meaning homeland. The *patria* becomes an extension of the self in the opinion of our author. For Dario, when we become interpolated with the nation, we become interposed with nature under the same pretenses. This means that “sky, air, land, springs, grass, men; all this that attracts us and holds us, then it converts into a symbol; that is the homeland” (Darío, *Crónica política* 141). Such a connection leads our author to conjecture that love for the homeland is love of the self. In this way, the nation, therefore, engenders selfish motives and individuality rather than reciprocity and solidarity among peoples and nations. Accordingly, couldn’t we say that under the colonially of power/knowledge, the political organization called ‘nation’ is used to divide and order populations around the globe?

In the same essay mentioned above, Ramón Grosfoguel argues against the nation and nationalism in a similar fashion to Darío’s argument. For Grosfoguel, he does not see Third World nationalism as a solution to supersede Eurocentrism. Rather, “[n]ationalism provides Eurocentric solutions to an Eurocentric global problem because “[i]t reproduces an internal coloniality of power within each nation-state and reifies the nation-state as the privileged location of social change” (Grosfoguel 16). Grosfoguel ascertains that political organization vis-à-vis the nation-state falls within the framework of Eurocentric thinking. For him, any national response to Eurocentrism defeats its only purpose because the concept of the nation-state is a Eurocentric construction situated in the coloniality of power/knowledge (Grosfoguel 160). Quijano himself plants this same idea in his essay “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America” when he
writes: “In this way the nation-state began as a process of colonization of some peoples over others that were, in this sense, foreigners, and therefore the nation-state depended on the organization of one centralized state over a conquered space of domination” (558). Thus, the nation-state is another manifestation of the coloniality of power/knowledge.

However, we must note that Darío believes that the idea of war is a natural phenomenon. He even uses Darwin to support his claim. For him, conflict and triumph between peoples and nations date back to Cain and Abel. The certain thing is that human fatality is a little bit Darwinian, and one of the first commentaries from the theory of the wise English man is inscribed in the donkey’s jaw of the effective survival of the fittest (strugflolífero) Cain” (Darío, Crónica política 137). Our poet appears to be falling within the trap of coloniality, where dualities are naturalized to appear innate. “Cainism is innate in man and demonstrative in nature itself” (Darío, Crónica política 139). So while Darío criticizes the nation for the violence it engenders, he justifies the violence using Darwin’s theory. Thus, we see the Eurocentric reflection in Darío’s locus of enunciation. His critique of the nation appears de-colonial, attempting to unravel injustice and violence; however, he cannot quite overcome the coloniality of power/knowledge because for him, “all life is a struggle, all life is a force, the number is already a hierarchy” (Darío, Crónica política 139). Darío’s world is a world of hierarchies, inequalities and violence, but as we have seen, this world does not keep Darío from formulating utopian visions of the future.

¿Por qué?” and “La locura de la Guerra” are the two chronicles were we best see Darío’s divided consciousness and de-colonial critiques. We see a subject whose
introspection leads him to question the dominant paradigms in the world around him, both rejecting and accepting the current configuration of the world under the coloniality of power/knowledge. Darío’s introspection continues in his understanding of race. Again, we find a subject whose views on race are ambiguous, perhaps even contradictory.

_Dario’s Divided Consciousness: Eurocentrism, Racism and Otherness_

Reviewing the corpus of Darío’s literary works, we find two writings that directly address the question of race, “La raza de Cham” and “El talento de los negros.” “La raza de Cham” is the concluding essay of Darío’s _Parisiana_, first published in 1907. Darío wrote “El talento de los negros” in Paris and published it in _La Nación_ in 1912. The essays are Darío’s potentially contradictory reflections on race. Let’s see Darío’s position in “La raza de Cham.” Darío’s objective in writing the essay appears ambiguous. On one side, he appears to support segregation and, on the other, equality. Take for example what he says in the opening paragraph.

While in scary catastrophes the yellows impose, in bloody farces the blacks are noted. It seems that an evil devil were setting the races some against others. Like this, because, the bad news arrives from Haiti to France. The crushed race is furious; the few white that are on the island see with fear the agitation of the natives. They know that an insurrection of color is terrible for Europeans. In the black, dancing, melancholic, jovial, picturesque, carnivalesque, rising, with the fire of cholera and the
movement of revolt in the anthropopetic ancestor, the cannibal from Africa, the dark beast from the hot jungles. (Darío, Parisiana 211)

Darío chooses to begin the essay emphasizing racial conflict in Haiti. While he does not overtly express his opinion on the revolution, we can infer from his representation of the event that the uprisings produce anxiety for our poet. Look at how he represents Haitian blacks, calling them cannibals from Africa and “the dark beast from the hot jungles.” Such a representation portrays blacks as uncivilized and barbaric. Darío then goes on to say that the Haitian revolt coincides with another troublesome sign—the publication of North American Dr. D. E. Tobías’ article. In the essay, Tobías challenges the dominance and hegemony of the Caucasian race.

For Darío, the problem is the emerging tension and violence between races in the world. We do not receive an argument at this point from our author, but the subsequent pages in the essay are telling given his choice of authors included in the essay—something that Erick Aguirre also acknowledges in his article “¿Contra la raza de Cham?: Segregacionismo dariano.” The authors Darío incorporates are racist in their discourses. The first individual he involves is Dr. Damián Lan. Darío cites Lan’s correspondences in which the Argentine writer says that the blacks “are the terror of foreign terrorists and the harmful shadow of their fellow white countrymen” (cited in Darío, Parisiana 212). Darío then proceeds to cite another passage of Lan where the Argentine states that the negrada has caused a social problem in the United States. Darío leaves out any analysis of the text, but he does reveal some clues that implicate his position on race—clues that Aguirre underlines as well.45 When introducing Lan in his text, Darío calls him “the
sensible Argentine writer” and says he includes Lan’s correspondences “because they are
a support to the wise opinion of Rémy de Gourmont about blacks and their attitude in
Anglo-Saxon America” (Darío, Parisiana 212). Like Gourmont, Dario claims that there
are insurmountable differences within the human species. Dario then goes on to cite
Gourmont in which the French symbolist writer argues that President Theodore
Roosevelt’s policy of giving equal rights to blacks is a dangerous path for the United
States’ power and prestige around the world. Dario quotes Gourmont saying:

“I see the black question, today particular to the United States, becoming
enormously important. Tomorrow it will be planted around the entire
world, under one color or another. The Americans, protesting against Mr.
Roosevelt’s excessively biblical views, serve the cause of civilization,
absolutely tied to the superiority of the white race; but if they would like
to obey him, and accept black leaders, marry with blacks, and procreate a
beautiful race of mulattos, if they agree to degenerate, in the end, they
would do a grand service to Europe. The country of judge Lynch is too
vigoroues to agree to such humiliations, and the noble patriotism of the
species is too potent. It is better to lynch blacks than erect statues to the
Schoelchers.” (cited in Darío, Parisiana 213)

Gourmont’s perspective is rooted racism—a result of social classification based on
phenotype. He uses race to establish difference between the United States and Europe.
What we can infer from Gourmont’s passage is that the United States occupies a superior
position in the world-system—a position that rivals if not supersedes Europe’s position in
the world hierarchy. Hence, the type of difference between the two continents here is imperial difference. Let’s remind ourselves that imperial difference refers to the difference that exists between dominant nations, or put differently, difference within the coloniality of power. According to Gourmont’s argument, if the United States were to become a nation of mestizos, or more precisely, mulattos, the dominant national racial composition would make Europe superior. Thus, the difference between the United States and Europe would now become a relationship based on colonial difference—all based on the racism constituted in and by the coloniality of power.

While Darío may be fearful of the revolts, he later states that blacks are not sufficiently organized to pose a real threat. “Happily, the black, in his species, does not have the conditions of the yellow race, and it is not easy, at least for now, that the dominance of the races of color that the convinced Tobías predicts, comes true, for the ruin and decline of Western civilization, in other words, white” (Darío, Parisiana 214). But, despite the perceived lack of organization, Darío concludes that the West should heed Tobías warning: “‘The problem of the 20th century will be the one of relations to come between the white race and the race of color in the world. I believe that the races of color with triumph over the white races’” (cited in Darío, Parisiana 217). If we take note of the Haitian Revolution, Tobías’ vision for the future is potentially a violent and blood one. Darío recognizes this when he concludes: “They will already have made sure in the country of stripes and stars to teach Tobías how Zarathustra would talk. But, how would Jesus talk?” (Darío, Parisiana 217). Aguirre concludes that what Darío proposes here, using the images of Zarathustra and Jesus Christ, is a return to “the Judeo-Christian ideal
of love and equality between humans” (3). While Darío may very well be recommending peace, equality and love, keeping in mind Darío’s previous statements, it might be better to state that Darío employs the religious imagery as a defense of Western culture. Because if Tobías’ prediction turned out to be true, Western culture would face the same practices that they used on non-Europeans—and if so, a violent, bloody future that would be.

Whereas “La raza de Cham” reveals Darío’s racist attitude towards non-whites, in “El talento de los negros,” our same author defends blacks and praises their achievements. If Darío’s Los raros details the intellectual production of Latin American, European and North American poets and writers, “El talento de los negros” traces the intellectual, scientific and literary production of blacks. Darío begins the essay by stating he had just finished reading a book on black literature. He tells us that the book was written by a bishop and published in 1808. Darío reproduces the book’s dedication to “all the valiant men who have defended the cause of the ill-fated blacks and mestizos” and gives a brief summary of its content (cited in Darío, Escritos dispersos 295). In so many words, the book detailed those who defended blacks and indigenous populations and denounced their exploitation since the beginning of the modern/colonial period. The book’s author argues that slavery falls on the wrong side of history, and proponents of such a practice are “enemies of humanity, and for that, the religion of Christ” (Darío, Escritos dispersos 296). Darío then goes on to say that while he does not necessarily believe the premise that blacks are superior to whites, he acknowledges the intellectual capability and production of blacks, claiming that “if the means of teaching were the
same, if we take into account the number of educated blacks; bishops, lawyers, preachers and professors, and from that, the number of experts that distinguished themselves in the universities and seminars of Lisbon, Rio de Janeiro and other Portuguese possessions can serve as important data, the assertion is not so doubtful” (Darío, Escritos dispersos 297). Darío’s argument here is a stark contrast from his argument in “La raza de Cham,” but, despite the discrepancies, what we find is that the two essays dialogue well together.

If in the previous essay Darío supports the notion that blacks were uncivilized and barbaric, he refutes the same idea in “El talento de los negros.” He attributes the brutality of blacks to the colonial, exploitative conditions they lived in. “The brutality of blacks is relative and almost always is not but the result of oppression and misery” (Darío, Escritos dispersos 297). He stops short from naming the oppressors or causes of misery, but in dialogue with the book he summarized, there is a clear allusion to the societies that practiced slavery during the modern/colonial time. Nonetheless, juxtaposing the two texts in such a way demonstrates an evolution in Darío’s thought. Thirteen years earlier he wrote an essay—“La raza de Cham”—that argued against blacks. Such a transformation can be noted in a progression from coloniality of power/knowledge to its de-coloniality. By this, I mean the Eurocentric naturalized dualities that linked race/identity do not hold up for Darío anymore. There is no longer a negative relationship between phenotype and knowledge. Skin color does not connote the ability to rationalize. In the opinion of Darío, both blacks and whites are equally rational and capable of knowledge production. As a result, we see a Darío who moves from a Eurocentric locus of enunciation to a de-colonial one. He crosses the border of
Eurocentrism and begins to destabilize the myths that constitute the colonially of power. The mere naming of achievements of blacks counters coloniality. Darío begins by naming notable blacks dating back to Cicero’s slave Marcus Tullius Tiro and continues with notable achievements during the 19th century. Take the following examples: “Jacob Dalsam, slave from Philadelphia, was one of the most notable doctors in New York. He wrote about medicine. Thomas Fuller, African, without knowing how to read or write possessed a marvelous ease with the most difficult calculations” (Darío, Escritos dispersos 298). The remainder of his essay continues with more examples of notable blacks.

Read back to back, these essays provide a contradictory view of our poet, and we may be left with questions regarding Darío’s own race. Darío and the question of race has been the topic of several scholars, namely Erick Blandón in his essay “Presencia de Rubén Darío en los discursos del mestizaje” and Sergio Ramírez in his Tambor olvidado. In his book, Ramírez establishes that Darío had not only European and indigenous ancestry, but also African. As such, Ramírez sustains that our poet represents an example of triple mestizaje. Though it is important to note, as Ramírez does, that Darío only saw himself as a mestizo of European and indigenous roots. Ramírez also summarizes the Eurocentric discourses that influenced the Nicaraguan poet. Ramírez states the following. Darío read works that reaffirmed the superiority of the West and Greco-Roman culture. The West’s superiority was articulated through notions of progress and scientific advancement. One of the more influential European writers/scientists that prejudiced Darío was Charles Darwin. We have already seen throughout this chapter Darío’s
references to Darwin or his theory in “La locura de la Guerra” and “La América Latina en Europa: á propósito de la cuestión chilenoargentina.” As Ramírez points out, Darwin himself ascertains that the Caucasian race is the most superior race, having conquered even the Turks. Another significant writer who influenced Darío was Rémy de Gourmont. As we have already seen, Gourmont believed in the superiority of the whites over all other races. Hence, we come to understand the racist, Eurocentric discourses that circulated around the world and came in contact with Darío. As a result, we may be wondering what Darío thought of his mestizo subjectivity, or mestizaje in general (Ramírez, Tambor olvido 15-32).

Ramírez claims that, for Darío, mestizaje was not a positive characteristic. He explains that Darío developed his own term for the racial mixture, mulatez—a term “that obviously does not go through a path of praise, as it could be said of ‘hispanidad’ or ‘indianidad,’ but rather through the path of disdain, as it could be said ‘estupidez,’” (Tambor olvido 25). Darío attributed mulatez with mediocrity. Given its mestizo composition, Latin America was condemned to a history of mediocrity, according to our poet. Others shared this opinion, even of our Darío. For example, Miguel de Unamuno and Gastón Baquero referred derogatorily to Darío based on his race (Ramírez, Tambor olvido 29). Even so, Ramírez reveals the contradiction in Darío’s Eurocentric line of thinking. From his locus of enunciation, Darío represented this mediocrity, being that he was mestizo. Yet, we know that Darío’s poetic works were anything but mediocre. Darío would come to recognize this as Ramírez notes. “But the mulatez [mulatto-ness] has a reverse and contrary face also. It is the face of Rubén himself, descendent of flood in
which all who have ‘the sign of descending from pious people and children of encomenderos, from African slaves, and form magnificent Indians’ and that come to represent all a stunning creative explosion in a new continent’ (Ramírez, Tambor olvidado 28). Again, we see a difference in the thought of our author, from Eurocentric thinking to de-colonial thinking.

Rubén Darío would become a symbol of mestizaje in the following decades in Latin America. Erick Blandón writes that within the first half of the 20th century, Darío—as a mestizo—converts into a symbol of racial pride as a result of Latin America’s vanguard movement. In Blandón’s discussion of the vanguard texts and authors, namely Pablo Antonio Cuadra and his works, he develops the question of mestizaje and Rubén Darío. We already know from Ramírez that although Darío was of African, indigenous and Spanish descent, he did not look upon mestizaje under a favorable light. Blandón explores the roots of Darío’s disdain for mestizaje and attributes the derision to Eurocentrism. He writes that Darío’s locus of enunciation was greatly influenced by European positivists, Romantics and thinkers from the Enlightenment. Such influences for Darío and other Latin American intellectuals lead them to privilege European culture over local ones. Blandón writes: “He, like the intellectuals of his time period believe in the beneficent influence of European culture, before . . . they succumb to the backwardness and ignorance of the local culture” (177). What is worth highlighting, as Blandón does, is that other Latin American intellectuals of the same period were caught up in Eurocentric thinking. Even Cuban national hero José Martí appears to devalue indigenous cultures. Blandón cites Jorge Camacho’s work where
Camacho states that Martí supported European investment in the lands of Guatemala for coffee production over the protection of indigenous rights to the same land. Others like Mexican writer Justo Sierra believed that indigenous populations in Mexico and Central America should be saved by educating them using a Eurocentric framework, as Blandón notes (177-178). Thus, Darío’s disdain for mestizaje represents a broader discourse on the place of indigenous populations in the nation. Blandón writes: “The rhetoric that fueled the constructor of a homogenous nation, was the fuel of the lettered elite—the Modernists included—in order to make invisible the indigenous communities deprived of their land for the benefit of European immigrants” (177-178). Consequently, while modernismo represents imitation as subversion, the movement’s poets and writers were still reproducing Eurocentric discourses—especially racist ones—that replicated and supported the coloniality of power/knowledge. Thus, we return to the question at the beginning of the section on de-coloniality. Within Darío’s writings, and Modernist works in general, we see both types of imitation that Quijano delineated above: imitation as subversion and imitation as reiteration of the coloniality of power/knowledge.

Conclusion

To summarize the chapter, my argument is that, by and large, Darío’s subjectivity is interpolated within the coloniality of power/knowledge. Through the analysis of his chronicles, articles, essays and letters, we see the political nature of Darío’s writings. His attempt to divorce himself from politics—calling himself apolitical—fails, as we see a
man who was deeply concerned about the future of Latin America. The end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th was a time of great uncertainty for Latin America. Newly minted nations had to redirect their efforts to the North rather than to the East. The United States’ foreign policy had people like Darío and Martí anxious for Latin America’s future. For Darío, his response was to look east again for European support, but at the same time, he was critical of Europe’s derogatory stereotypes and dismal of Latin America. Tracing Darío’s thoughts in his prose reveals a network composed of geopolitical flows of knowledge constituted within Eurocentrism. Nonetheless, the oscillatory, if not contradictory, nature of Darío’s works reveals a subject whose consciousness was divided. Surrounded and influenced by Eurocentric thought, Darío had a difficult time not reproducing the same thoughts. However, Darío was able to break from the grips of Eurocentrism to critique coloniality. Thus, we have the rare instances of Darío’s de-colonial thought.

To conclude this chapter, we return to a passage from Quijano’s “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America” that roughly describes the concept of double consciousness in Latin American terms.

The Eurocentric perspective of knowledge operates as a mirror that distorts what it reflects, as we can see in the Latin American historical experience. That is to say, what we Latin Americans find in that mirror is not completely chimerical, since we possess so many and such important historically European traits in many material and intersubjective aspects. But at the same time we are profoundly different. Consequently, when we
look in our Eurocentric mirror, the image that we see is not just composite, but also necessarily partial and distorted. (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power” 556)

This passage helps us understand my argument here in this chapter. As exemplified through his works, Darío knew that Latin America’s experience did not completely resemble Europe’s or North America’s. Even though Darío may have embodied a Eurocentric perspective of knowledge, we find many distortions in the reflections, that is, de-colonial distortions. Seeing his reflection in the Eurocentric mirror, there are unreconciled images that keep him from truly being a fully Eurocentric, colonial subject. It is with supposition that I argue that Darío’s consciousness was divided between two worlds and futures, colonial and de-colonial ones.
Chapter 3

Out of (Dis)order: V.S. Naipaul’s Colonial/Imperial Gaze

“To work for an outfit like this is to live in a construct—you don’t have to tell me that. But all men live in constructs. Civilization is a construct. And this construct is my own. Within it, I am of value, just as I am. I have to put nothing on. I exploit myself” (Naipaul, A Bend 155).

“I began to think I wanted to be a child again, to forget books and everything connected with books ” (Naipaul, A Bend 272).

If curiosity is a characteristic of the cosmopolitan, the cosmopolitanism on which Trinidad prides itself is fraudulent. In the immigrant colonial society, with no standards of its own, subjected for years to the second-rate in newspapers, radio and cinema, minds are rigidly closed; and Trinidadians of all races and classes are remaking themselves in the image of the Hollywood B-man. This is the full meaning of modernity in Trinidad. (Naipaul, Middle 56)

The 1980’s British television series The Jewel in the Crown begins much like one of Naipaul’s novels. The series’ first episode opens under the cover of darkness in the countryside just outside the fictional Indian city of Mayapore. Sister Ludmila Smith finds a man passed out near her compound and brings him in to nurse him back to health. We find out the next morning that the man—Mr. Hari Kumar—was drunk the night before and had passed out as a result. That same morning the District Superintendent of police, Ronald Merrick, stops by Smith’s compound and encounters a hung-over Kumar. An interrogation ensues, and a defiant, sassy Kumar is subsequently detained. The next scene introduces us to an English woman, Daphne Manners, who comes to live with Lili
Chatterjee after her father and brother are killed in World War II. One day at a party hosted by Chatterjee, Manners meets Kumar and instantly is attracted to him. While they step out of the party for a moment, they begin to discuss their respective childhoods. Both of them were raised and educated in England. Like Manners, Kumar comes to India after spending nearly his whole life in Great Britain. His father, too, had passed away, and Kumar goes to live with his aunt. For Manners, the commonalities between the two are striking. However, Kumar does not see it that way. When she states that “It makes us rather the same,” Kumar retorts, “How the same?” (“Crossing the River”). Kumar becomes indignant at Manners’ comparison. For him, they are different. At the time, he does not explain why he sees himself different from her, but as the first episode continues, it becomes apparent why.

What separates Manners and Kumar is their position within the colonial matrix of power that governs social, economic and political relations. The series opens during World War II in India, just before Indian independence in 1947. Throughout the first episode, Kumar is often mistaken for being Indian given his skin color. For instance, in his run-in with Merrick, the officer begins speaking Hindi with Kumar rather than English. The problem is Kumar does not speak Hindi. He tells Merrick that he does speak “Indian.” Later on, Manners makes a similar mistake when she asks him where he learned to speak English so well. An irritated Kumar replies in England. Despite his identification as more British than Indian, he cannot escape being identified as Indian. For the British in Mayapore, Kumar is not British; he is Indian. His skin color and heritage keeps him from being ‘English.’ Thus, he is neither Indian nor English. He is a
subject in flux—something the pronunciation of his last name illustrates. Depending on Kumar’s location, his name is pronounced differently, as he explains to Manners one afternoon. In England, his last name was pronounced Kumar, with the accent falling on the first syllable. For purposes here, we might distinguish the pronunciation with an accent mark over the letter ‘u:’ Kúmar. In India, the accent falls on the last syllable; the accent mark on the letter ‘a,’ Kumár, marking this distinction. Throughout the first episode, Kumar is addressed using both pronunciations. Again, this is another detail that demonstrates Kumar’s subjectivity in flux.

Kumar will never be English, and this becomes quite evident. As the plot develops, Manners and Kumar begin to court each other. A mutual affection appears to blossom. The problem is, though, that Merrick is courting Manners as well. One night after a date between Merrick and Manners, Merrick expresses his displeasure with Manners’ decision to see Kumar. The officer takes issue with Manners when she says that the skin color of the people with whom she associates is not important. This infuriates Merrick, and he states, “That’s the oldest trick in the game, pretending color doesn’t matter. It does matter. It’s basic; it matters like hell” (“Crossing the River”). Later, Merrick denies Kumar any “Englishness” due to Kumar’s skin color—citizenship is ethnic. Thus, Kumar was correct in saying that Manners’ and his experiences are quite different because what separates them is colonial difference. Racism relegates Kumar to an inferior position in the global hierarchy of being. Neither England nor India is his home. The color of his skin keeps him from being English, and his childhood and most
of his life’s experiences in England keep him from being completely Indian. He is doomed to being half-English, half-Indian, without one place truly his home.

V.S. Naipaul orders his novels to include many of the same themes in *The Jewel in the Crown*: homelessness, half-life and coloniality. Naipaul himself is in many aspects similar to Kumar in the first episode, particularly as a subject in flux. Naipaul is born in Trinidad in 1932 to parents of Indian descent. In 1950, he receives a scholarship to study in England. After his studies he never returns for long to live in the Caribbean, rather opting to live in England for most of his life (King 7-10). If you were to call Naipaul a West Indian writer, he would most likely chastise you. He does not consider himself a West Indian. If he were to identify a geographical region as home, he would most likely call England it. Yet, he would have problems telling you that also. He has travelled all over the world, spending time in South America, India, Africa, Europe, the Caribbean and the United States. His novels can be characterized by their loose connection to biographical or historical events and influences from previous writers like Joseph Conrad. For instance, darkness seeps into and out of Naipaul’s works—much like Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Many of his novels evolve around the independence movements in the so-called Third World. He primarily writes about Africa, India, South America, the Caribbean and England during a career that spans nearly half a century. Read how Louis Simpson in his article “Disorder and Escape in the Fiction of V.S. Naipaul” characterizes Naipaul’s works. “The greater part of the fiction of V. S. Naipaul is set in the states of Africa and the Caribbean, and the view is pessimistic: the natives have taken the government into their own hands but are unable to establish order” (Simpson 572). Or
as Robert Boyer writes in his article “V.S. Naipaul,” “[f]or it is the constant burden of Naipaul’s fiction to suggest that human beings are fundamentally unequal, and that right thinking cannot alter the facts of life” (359).

For depictions like these, many critics have accused Naipaul of portraying the ‘Third World’ in an unfavorable light, and for that, he is a polemical figure. In this chapter, I examine three texts, The Middle Passage, A Bend in the River and Half a Life, and explain why Naipaul is controversial. I argue that he is a colonial/imperial author whose literature is characterized for its engagement with the coloniality of power/knowledge. I use the term “colonial/imperial” to denote the relationship between both in the case of Naipaul and others like him. By colonial, I refer to the two senses of the term, both in the social sense ‘coloniality’ and the political sense ‘colonialism.’ By imperial, I use the term to denote empire, in other words, the position on the other side of the equation colony/empire. The imperial is the site where coloniality and colonial difference are generally constructed. However, I use the slash between the two terms to refer to those who find themselves outside of the empire (either due to geography or phenotype) yet who uphold and replicate an imperial locus of enunciation. Thus, Naipaul’s gaze is colonizing and imperial, yet the gaze itself emerges from a colonized subject. Another way to articulate the relationship is to use the term ‘colonized/colonizer.’ My claim is that Naipaul’s works reiterate coloniality. If in chapter two I gave Dario the benefit of the doubt for being an author with a divided (often contradictory) consciousness, here, I do not afford the same interpretation for Naipaul. He is a writer who, in most cases, finds the West superior to other regions
around the world. Rather than argue that the South must learn from the North, Naipaul reaffirms the traditional unidirectional flow of knowledge from North to South under the colonial matrix of power. As such, the colonial (or coloniality) paradigm constitutes and gives form to Naipaul’s works. Nonetheless, in rare instances does Naipaul present de-colonial critiques, and in that sense, one might argue that he has a conflicted, contradictory consciousness as I did with Darío. However, I do not make this argument in this chapter. Naipaul is Eurocentric in his thinking.

In addition to arguing Naipaul’s Eurocentrism, I claim that three of Naipaul’s works I examine here—*The Middle Passage* (1962), *A Bend in the River* (1979) and *Half a Life* (2001)—reveal the intersection between the coloniality of power/knowledge and narrative. My argument is that his literature is a site and affirmation of the coloniality. His novels present a clear order in which the West occupies a superior and unparalleled position to the rest of the world. My argument is not new. Many others, like Edward Said, have claimed that Naipaul is a Eurocentric subject who inscribes a Western epistemology on India, Africa, the Caribbean and South America and relegates these regions and their inhabitants to a primitive, dark past never able to reach the West in their imitation of it. Edward Said writes in his *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* that Naipaul “sees in today’s Third World only counterfeits of the First World, never such things as apartheid or the wholesale American devastation of Indochina” (100-101). Part of my objective is to highlight how ordering and naming become part of the colonial/modern project. It is the ordering and (re)naming of geographies and
subjectivities that create colonial difference, or more globally, the coloniality of power/knowledge.

*Naming and Ordering the Colonies:*

*(Re)inscribing Geographies and Subjectivities in the Capitalist Colonial/Modern Period*

Through Aníbal Quijano and Walter Mignolo, I have already established, in chapter one, that coloniality/modernity commenced with the “discovery” of the “New World.” I have been careful to place the words “discovery” and “New World” in quotation marks throughout this dissertation because the terms are Eurocentric euphemisms for colonization. “Discovery” and “New World” diminish the violence and brutality of colonization. Rather, coloniality/modernity began with the often violent, unwelcomed appropriation and exploitation of territories and their inhabitants. Make no mistake about it; the “discovery” of the “New World” was the violent and unwarranted colonization of the Americas. So, in this sense, we can think of the words “discovery” and “New World” as Eurocentric misnomers used to hide European brutality. After all, colonizers needed to save the term “savage” to disqualify and decimate indigenous populations. What I want to examine in this section is this power to name and to order. Within a Eurocentric world, colonization is “discovery.” The colonizers had the power to name their actions the way they wanted. The conquest of indigenous populations allowed Europeans to name and order geographies and populations in the Americas.
The question of renaming and re-ordering is what Ileana Rodríguez takes up in her work in “Desorientaciones geográficas, extrañamientos lingüísticos, deposiciones desarticuladas, rediseño de tierras, reescritura de leyes, conversiones fingidas. Culturas en pugna, historias sin fin.” There, Rodríguez examines Domingo Juarros’ encyclopedic works Compendio de la Historia de la ciudad de Guatemala (1808-1810) y Crónicon del Reino de Guatemala (1818) to articulate the relationship between power, topography, geography and language. Juarros’ works describe the Guatemalan geography and topography, establish and define Hispanic-indigenous nomenclature and detail the uprooting and re-location of the indigenous populations. Using Juarros’ work, Rodríguez argues that to rename is to resettle (“Desorientaciones” 44). To rename is to rearticulate or re-territorialize the relationship between the signifier and signified. Her analysis is significant because language, and equally important, the systemization of knowledge—like the encyclopedia—, become apparatuses of power. Books become an effective storeroom to house the Eurocentric reordering and renaming of local geographies and subjectivities. From a Eurocentric perspective, colonies like Guatemala are simply geographies, empty lands whose previous local names, if any, can be erased and then re-inscribed. European epistemology replaces anything they want. However, re-inscribing topographies establishes colonial differences. Thus, books are archives in which colonial difference is constructed; they are museums whose function in the accumulation of meaning and knowledge is the construction of difference, as Mignolo would have it.47

In his essay “Museums in the Colonial Horizon of Modernity,” Mignolo argues that the museum is a modern/colonial structure whose intent is to catalogue and order
knowledge. He states that “Museums and universities were and continue to be two crucial institutions for the accumulation of meaning and the reproduction of the coloniality of knowledge and of beings” (Mignolo, “Museums” 71). For him, the museum is unique in that it is the site of both the accumulation of meaning and of capital; it works to solidify European and non-European identities. To support his claim, Mignolo offers Frantz Boaz’s two types of ethnographic museums and their different, yet complementary objectives. The goal of the first is to accumulate, catalogue and order European knowledge and identity—in this sense, it legitimates European being and constructs meaning and serves Eurocentrism. The goal of the second is to accumulate, catalogue, order and interpret non-European cultures and histories (Mignolo, “Museums” 72-74). The objective of this type of museum is most akin to Juarros’ objective in encyclopedia project. Both survey, collect and name in order to construct and accumulate meaning of the non-European, and in doing so, both projects manufacture colonial difference.

However, ordering and naming can have another purpose during the colonial/modern period as Ileana Rodríguez points out in her work Hombres de empresa, saber y poder en Centroamérica: Identidades Regionales/Modernidades Periféricas. Continuing with her analysis of Central America, Rodríguez examines the region’s renaming and ordering at the hands of North American travel writers and businessmen. In her work, she makes a distinction between the early process of colonization that I just described above and the economic colonization that continues after independence. In other words, she notes a difference between the naming and ordering that occurred during
the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries and then later in 18th and 19th centuries. “If during the colonial period, being successful means possessing territory and establishing oneself on it, reducing populations, constructing cities, in the early nationalist era means drawing with exactitude and care those maps that will serve as guide to investment and the organization of collections in order to fatten up the historiographical body and produce information” (Rodríguez, Hombres 40).

Her main argument is that European travel narratives of Central America during the 19th century reveal Europe’s continued attempt to name and order the land and its inhabitants. European travelers, like Arthur Morelet, collected knowledge about Central America during their visits. She then turns to North America and uses the example of John Lloyd Stephens’ Incidents in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatán to demonstrate how Central America was discursively re-produced to fall within the capitalist world-system. She argues that Stephens’ discursive production of ancient Mayans (1) represents the capitalist intervention in Central America and (2) constructs a division established in colonial difference between the Mayans of long ago and the indigenous populations living in Central America during the 19th century. Rodríguez gives us some context about our subject in question. Stephens was the son of a North American merchant who was known for his so-called re-discovery of the Mayans and his economic interventions in the region. As she notes, Stephens was instrumental in constructing the trans-isthmus railway in Panama and known for his travel accounts in Central America, Egypt, Greece, Turkey and Russia. He even bought the Mayan ruins of Copán for 50 pesos (Rodríguez, Hombres 73).
What is of importance to us, and to Rodríguez, are his travel accounts. Rodríguez begins her analysis with the title of Stephens’ travel account. She wonders about the term “incident.” What does the word mean exactly? For her, “incident is indispensably all that which establishes contrasts with the everyday, palpable in the difference between the model of how things and people’s behavior should be, and that which does not fit or is novel” (Rodríguez, *Hombres* 76). So, we can understand the incident as novel, or new.

We have already examined the concept of newness with Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein, but how does Rodríguez view novelty? For her, “[t]he novel (discovery) is the potentially merchantable or the disposable, for example, a ruin/monument never before seen, a simulacrum of purchase-sale, the vision of the social as grotesque” (Rodríguez, *Hombres* 77). Rodríguez’s understanding of ‘incident’ makes Quijano and Wallerstein’s claims on newness more productive. Let’s remind ourselves that Quijano and Wallerstein argue that the “discovery” of the “New World” engendered the concept of newness. It was this idea of novelty, the unknown, the incident that drove Europeans to cross the Atlantic in search for riches.

Rodríguez demonstrates that, three centuries later, it is the concept of newness itself that is commodified. “Incidents situates itself like this within the financial stage of capitalism which produces the modernization of America and its ‘second invention,’ or ‘discovery’” (Rodríguez, *Hombre* 74). She tells us that for some, like Michael Coe, Stephens was the individual who initiated this second “discovery.” Within a matrix of coloniality, Stephens’ archeological work and description of Mayan ruins discursively (re)produces a commodification or capitalization of the indigenous. This is the crux of
Rodríguez’s argument. “I sustain here that the encounter with the urban remains of the Mayan cultures initiates a process of capitalization of indigenous cultural identities, that continue manifesting themselves in the present through the integration of monuments to the tourism industry” (Rodríguez, Hombres 76). She lists off the consequences of these ‘incidents’ on cultural indigenous identities. Two of the consequences that she names concern us in this chapter: (1) a romantization, pacification and miniaturization of the landscape and (2) the division between modernity and antiquity, or in other words, the modern subject and the non-modern one.

The romantization of the landscape comes in the lexicon used to describe the land. Rodríguez mentions Stephens’ description of a “gentle river” or “a wall of bright green” as examples of this softening, idyllic language (Hombres 77). “The incident produces the country and the nation as an altarpiece, landscape, the picturesque-sentimental (the miniaturization) makes it nice, and, above all, manageable); the productive habits and the techniques to achieve them—tortillas/food/agriculture” (Rodríguez, Hombres 78). Descriptions like these tropicalize and exoticize the landscape. The land becomes dominion of the traveler, at the mercy of the observer’s pen. Furthermore, as Rodríguez notes, national identity itself is tropicalized. The identities “dissolve… into an immense green jungle” (Rodriguez, Hombres 78). Stephens’ Incidents re-orders Central America. In early-late modernity, the indigenous were still sources of labor. They were the producers, often against their will. While Stephens minimizes indigenous populations living during the 19th century, he capitalizes on the indigenous past, tropicalizing and exoticizing the past for capital gain in the present.
The division between the modern and the non-modern subject emerges from the so-called incident. From the description of the non-ordinary, we see how the indigenous subject is relegated to the past. There is a temporal distinction between the North American explorer and the indigenous subject, one modern, the other not. Rodríguez cites Stephens’ text as an example.

The image of the ‘solitary foreigner, [Stephens himself] who comes from an unknown world [his home-country], [and who] one day walked over the ruins of this [the dead Indian’s] marvelous and proud city, meditating on the destiny of the race that was extinguished many years ago,’ shoots the idea of the encounter or ‘rediscovery,’ or dialogue between historians and traveling ‘archeologists,’ on the appreciation of the Mayan culture as stone (the inert), ruin (antiquity), monument (civilization). . . (Rodríguez, Hombres 79)

Stephens highlights the past. He emphasizes Mayan culture and civilization in its antiquity, not in its present form. Its grandeur stays in the past. Such interpretation or emphasis reiterates the Western episteme over others. The ruins of Mayan greatness do not threaten Western hegemony and dominance. In my opinion, Rodríguez’s analysis unearths the discursive production of coloniality.

Nevertheless, we have to remember that the other side of the colonially/modernity equation is modernity. The capitalization of Mayan identities represents the other side of the coin—modernity. Stephens’ Incidents relegates Mayan cultural identities to the past (coloniality) and uses this past to accumulate capital
(modernity). The two constructs are inseparable. Modernity is literally and figuratively financed and sustained through coloniality. “In Stephen, large are the ruins, antiquity . . . Large are the indigenous cultures, small its inhabitants. . . . Large the landscape . . . Small are the houses of ‘sticks and canes, and roofs with palm leaves’ (32-3), large the desire to invest and large, despite the people and landscape, the possibilities of investment in railways and transoceanic canals” (Rodríguez, Hombres 84). The economization of landscapes and identities is not endemic to Central America.

In Naipaul’s *A Bend in the River*, we too see an economy of African landscapes and subjectivities. Yet, in the novel’s case, the economization fails in various aspects as European order disappears during the decolonization process.

*Accumulation of Knowledge: Colonial (Re)inscriptions in A Bend in the River*

*A Bend in the River* by V.S. Naipaul is a novel that tells the story of the life and experiences of Salim, Naipaul’s narrator and protagonist. Born on the east coast of Africa to a Muslim family of Indian descent, Salim follows in the footsteps of his father and grandfather by becoming a businessman. While his father and grandfather conducted their business as traders on the African east coast, Salim has a different plan in mind. As a twenty-something year-old man, he leaves the coast to take over a shop in the interior of the continent. He purchases the business from a family friend who he had met while growing up on the coast, Nazruddin. Salim admires Nazruddin’s skill as a businessman, so when Nazruddin offers to sell his trading business to Salim, does not hesitate to
purchase it. Though, Nazruddin’s offer comes with a friendly warning. The place where his shop is located—in a town at the bend of the river—is a difficult, unstable place to live. Nazruddin is selling the business because he is relocating his family to Uganda, a nearby country where the sociopolitical situation is more stable.

Despite Nazruddin’s warning, Salim still heads to the interior. Upon his arrival to the town, he notes the disorder that Nazruddin had left. The shop is empty of its contents, and the town is in ruins. But, once Salim opens shop, villagers start to frequent his business. One of his regular customers is Zabeth, a magician or sorceress who travels 60 miles by dugout canoe to shop in the town. During one of her visits, Zabeth asks Salim to take her son, Ferdinand, as an apprentice. Although Salim is reluctant, he obliges her request. He has already taken in another young man, Metty, whom Salim knew before he arrived; Metty was one of the family’s servants and the family had sent Metty to help Salim. So, with two teenagers under his wing, Salim tries to eek out a living in the town at the river. While Naipaul neither reveals the country where most of the story takes place nor names the president, most critics agree that he has set his novel in the Congo during the 1960’s when Mobutu was the country’s president.

As the plot progresses, we do not read so much about Salim’s experience as a merchant as we do about his experiences and relationships in the town. He befriends several people, and most of them are not from the region. Some of the first people Salim meets are Indar and a couple named Shoba and Mahesh. Like Salim, Shoba and Mahesh are from Africa’s east coast, and, like him, they are in the town to make money. Similar to Salim, Indar is of Indian descent, comes from a rich merchant family, and comes and
goes in the novel. After some time in the lycée, Indar goes off to London, only to return to work at the polytechnic university that the president founded after his departure. However, once his term is up at the university, he returns to London.

Indar plays an important role because he introduces Salim to Raymond and Yvette. Indar is Yvette’s lover, and they spend much time together while Yvette’s husband, Raymond, works as a presidential advisor. Yvette and Raymond had once lived in the capital, close to the president. The “Big Man” (Salim’s name for the country’s leader) eventually relocates Raymond and his wife to the town at the bend of the river where he is to continue his research and speech writing for the president. The problem for Raymond, though, is that in all likelihood, the president will never solicit his help again.

The town itself occupies much of Salim’s narration. When he arrives, the town is just as Nazruddin had described it—a chaotic, violent place that held a bleak future. However, with the president’s help, the town begins to change. The city undergoes a transformation. The president inaugurates a polytechnic institute, making the place an educational hub. The progress brings Indar back and allows for Mahesh and Shoba, Salim’s merchants friends, to deepen their pockets with additional business investments. Yet, Salim is skeptical of the town’s success. He envisions a disordered future for the town. His foreboding turns out to be correct. The town plunges into chaos. Fear and violence govern it as violent clashes occur between governmental and opposition forces.

Salim’s life is unraveling before his eyes. Amidst the chaos, the state nationalizes Salim’s business, and he loses Metty as a servant. The state trustee appoints Metty as
assistant manager of the shop, but Metty knows that remaining in the town is not a wise decision. In an attempt to escape the impending violence in the town, he demands money from Salim. Salim rebuffs the request. Metty then reveals to the police that Salim is illegally selling elephant tusks. Salim’s only way out of avoiding prison is paying the police chief a bribe of thousands of dollars. Now knowing there is no future for him and fearing for his life, he buys a ticket to leave on the steamer as soon as possible, and he does so just hours before the president is to visit the town. The novel ends with Salim’s escape from a town whose social and political order has completely disintegrated. Africa plunges back into darkness.

Despite the novel’s setting in Africa, the representation of the continent and its inhabitants does not come from an ‘African.’ As Kenneth W. Harrow points out in his essay “An African Reading of Naipaul’s ‘A Bend in the River,’” that even though Salim was born in Africa and spent nearly his whole life there, he does not consider himself to be African (325). Salim is a non-African African, as I call him, or “non-native native,” as Joseph Walunywa calls him because, again, citizenship is ethnic.\(^48\) In the novel, the alleged non-African African, Salim, describes the geographies and subjectivities, from a liminal space detailing the changes of the continent. Hence, we readers are aware from the very beginning of the hybrid positionality—if not double consciousness—from which Naipaul structures the novel. One of the aspects I want to underscore is the meeting of Salim and Raymond at Raymond and Yvette’s house because it is there where Salim instantly is drawn to Yvette’s beauty and the peculiar relationship between Raymond and Yvette. Raymond, a dedicated scholar, shuns relationships with others, including his
wife, to work. Thus, it is no surprise that at the party, Raymond spends most of the night in his study working. Nonetheless, at one point during the evening, he does step away from his studies to join his wife and their guests. It is during this time that Salim converses with Raymond, and their conversation leaves Salim intrigued.

As advisor to the president, Raymond’s research helps the president in his decision-making, and, accordingly, the president initially holds Raymond in high regard. It is Indar who has introduced Raymond to the couple and the one who explains Raymond’s position to Salim: “The President, or the Big Man, as you call him, sent him down here to keep an eye on things. He’s the Big Man’s white man. In all these places there’s someone like that. Raymond’s a historian. They say the President reads everything he writes. . . . Raymond knows more about the country than anyone on earth” (Naipaul, A Bend 125). In other words, Raymond’s role is one of mediation. He is the person Africans need to understand Europeans, he who helps them understand themselves and the nation, so, even after independence, Africa looks to the North for assistance. It seems that African identity and its future hinge upon its European counterpart. Raymond’s role in ‘post-colonial’ Africa is indeed a colonial one. His supposedly vast and critical understanding of Africa and its history is a sham; he is, in effect, an impotent scholar. Even though he spends most of his time in his office researching and writing, Raymond has not produced much, except his thesis, a few journal, newspaper and magazine articles (Naipaul, A Bend 172). For Salim, Raymond does not really even know or understand Africa. He claims:
He knew so much, had researched so much. He must have spent weeks on each article. But he had less true knowledge of Africa, less feel for it, than Indar or Nazruddin or even Mahesh; he had nothing like Father Huismans’s instinct for the place. Yet he had made Africa his subject. He had devoted years to those boxes of documents in his study that I had heard about from Indar. Perhaps he made Africa his subject because he had come to Africa and because he was a scholar, used to working with papers, and found a place full of new papers. (Naipaul, *A Bend* 182)

Salim’s description of Raymond’s project sure sounds like Domingo Juárros’ colonial project in Guatemala we examined above. Like Juárros, Raymond continues the colonial practice of the accumulation of knowledge and meaning, understanding, naming and cataloging a non-European place, subjecting it to an inferior status in the global hierarchy. I consider this a double articulation that highlights the relationship between coloniality and knowledge. However, despite Raymond’s initial involvement in the government as a presidential advisor, his importance in the alleged unnamed country is marginalized as the plot develops. The president depends less and less on Raymond and his knowledge. The process of decolonization may be said to begin when his alleged expertise is no longer of value; when the president no longer uses his speeches or solicits his help (Naipaul, *A Bend* 190). The only power he has left is his façade of authority, and as we learn from Salim, that is in a precarious state. “His position in the Domain required him to display authority. But at any moment he might be stripped of this authority, reduced to nothing, with nothing to fall back on” (Naipaul, *A Bend* 189). Here,
Salim describes the process of decolonization, both in political and social understandings. Raymond has “been sent away from the capital. The Big Man is going his own way, and he no longer needs Raymond. Everyone knows that, but Raymond thinks they don’t. It’s a dreadful thing for a man of his age to have to live with” (Naipaul, A Bend 139). Raymond looses his power to name and shape the country’s historical narrative. The (ex)colony no longer depends on the empire.

In this sense, his relegation could be interpreted as a debasement of Europe’s power; Africans no longer depend on Europeans for the expertise or mediation for the production and accumulation of knowledge and meaning. Nevertheless, there is a catch here: Raymond’s marginalization coincides with the dissolution of social order; his mediation withdrawn coincides or is one with the nascent independent nation’s chaotic downfall. For Naipaul, decolonization was a disastrous event—something Ranu Samantrai recognizes his article “Claiming the Burden: Naipaul’s Africa.” Samantrai argues that A Bend in the River portrays decolonization “as an aberration in the history of progress. If Europe is the epitome of social evolution, then movement away from it is always a step backward in history and in maturity” (Samantrai 60).

It is no coincidence that Naipaul chooses to associate Raymond’s marginalization and eventual departure from Africa with the collapse of social stability in the country. While one could say that decolonization in the novel leaves no need for the European, and, thus, Naipaul is marking the triumph of de-coloniality, the chaos and civil unrest that emerges shortly after Raymond’s exodus appears to argue for continued foreign
intervention and its corollary, the inability of ‘natives’ to govern themselves. Salim describes the political situation after independence as such.

But there was no plan; there was no law; this was only make-believe, play, a waste of men’s time in the world. And how often here, even in the days of bush, it must have happened before, this game of warders and prisoners in which men could be destroyed for nothing. I remembered what Raymond used to say—about events being forgotten, lost, swallowed up. (Naipaul, *A Bend* 267)

Put differently, left without Europe’s ordering of Africa, things fall apart—Chinua Achebe’s famous phrase. Is this not Eurocentrism *par excellence*? To leave no doubt about Naipaul’s view on the subject, in an interview with Elizabeth Hartwick in 1979 (the same year *A Bend in the River* was published), a propos his travel in the Congo in 1955 and 1956, he says to Hartwick:

“I saw there a rich town, abandoned by the Belgians. Street lamps rusty, sand everywhere, collapsed verandas. The Africans were camping in the houses, just the way the ancient English camped in the abandoned villas of the Romans. Here again in Africa one was back in the 5th century. Native people camping in the ruins of civilization. You could see the bush creeping back as you stood there. . . .” (Hartwick 46-47)

For Naipaul, Africa’s rejection of the West (Raymond) plunges the continent back into the past. The West’s absence is the absence of civilization. So, when Hartwick asks what his opinion of Africa’s future is, we are not surprised how he responds. “‘Africa
has no future,’” he says (Hartwick 49). For Naipaul, colonialism was Africa’s only chance for a better future.50

Accumulation of Capital: the Capitalization of African Landscapes and Subjectivities

in A Bend in the River

While Raymond’s character reveals Europe’s footprint in the mediation, construction and accumulation of knowledge in Africa, we cannot ignore the economic imprint that capitalism leaves on the continent. Consumption and the accumulation of capital reshape the African countryside and, for us, readers, the most productive way to understand these transformations is to examine Salim.

As I stated above, as he grows up on the coast, he meets Nazruddin, a family friend. As long as Salim has known him, Nazruddin has been the consummate capitalist. Salim says: “Everything worked out well for him, and his tales of unfailing luck would have made him intolerable if he didn’t have the gift of describing things so well. . . . In some ways he became my model” (Naipaul, A Bend 21). So, when Nazruddin offers to sell him his shop in the town at the bend of the river, Salim purchases it, despite the region’s political instability. Once he is installed in the town, we begin to see how capitalism reshapes Africa and its inhabitants. In this regard, I must underline two aspects. First, in the representation of Africa’s economic reordering, Africans rarely, if ever, occupy an active or productive role in the economic transformation. Second, when Salim uses the term modernization, I argue it is synonymous with the capitalization of
geography and subjectivities. By this, I mean that modernization establishes capitalism as the *modus operandi* for social, political and cultural relations. We can now begin with Salim’s observations and thoughts on the economic transactions and developments in the town.

According to Salim, the town is an important commercial outpost given its proximity to the river. Many people from all over the region come to make purchases. For example, in the first chapter, we learn that Zabeth travels to Salim’s shop to buy basic goods to take back to her village some sixty miles away. Such a long trek seems commonplace in the area, and one of the most efficient modes of transportation for the journey is by dugout canoe. Salim tells us that numerous dugout canoes pass by on the river. However, they are not the only watercraft to travel the river, steamers and barges do so as well. The steamers, barges and canoes together form a curious relationship. The dugouts are often seen in the steamer or barge’s wake. This is because Africans throw ropes up to those on board the steamer to hitch a ride. “This attaching of dugouts to the moving steamer or barge was a recognized river practice, but it was dangerous. Almost every trip the steamer made there was a report of a dugout being overturn somewhere along the thousand-mile route and of people being drowned” (Naipaul, *A Bend 7*). I describe this relationship curious because at first sight, this practice might describe the ingenuity of Africans as they adapt to modernization. However, read as a metaphor of coloniality, I believe that Salim’s description of this practice is more sinister.

In his essay “Naipaul’s *A Bend in the River* and Neo-colonialism as a Comparative Context,” Haidar Eid argues that Naipaul’s depiction of Africans relegates
them to the role of the consumer rather than the producer. “Naipaul’s Africans are only consumers . . . Although there is an economic boom, Naipaul’s Africans never take it as a chance to produce” (Eid 7). The free ride that the Africans receive from the steamers and barges supports Eid’s criticism of Naipaul’s novel. Like the parasitic remora on the fins of a shark, the novel portrays Africans as parasites of modernity. They consume but do not produce; they move but do not paddle. In other words, they are dependent on Europe, and the notion of dependence, in this case, is a colonial construct. We might wonder why this example of dependence is colonial. It is colonial because the two social groups in the novel—Europeans and Africans—are not equal; colonial difference separates them. Thus, the dependence is not reciprocal in an egalitarian manner; it is unidirectional in a relationship where a supposedly inferior social group depends on an allegedly superior one.

The steamer itself is an intervention in the African landscape. As a symbol of modernity and modernization, the vessel holds a tenuous relationship with the landscape. During the period of rapid modernization, the steamer is partially responsible for transporting Europeans to the region. It facilitates foreign economic development and Westernization. “It was happening very fast. The copper money was pouring in, pushing up prices in our town. The deep, earth-shaking burr of bulldozers competed with the sound of the rapids. Every steamer brought up European builders and artisans, every airplane” (Naipaul, A Bend 100). The steamer facilitates economic success, and in turn, the economic development transforms the social composition of African society. More Europeans arrive, and the businesses thrive. One of these thriving businesses is
Bigburger. As a hamburger joint, Bigburger is perhaps one of the strongest symbols of Westernization. It is Salim’s friend, Mahesh, who decides to convert his hardware store into the Western-style restaurant. The Bigburger company sends everything to him—the milk-shake machines, the ketchup dispensers, the stools, everything. All he has to do is retrofit his hardware store and ready it for its transformation. Like the store, Mahesh himself is transformed. “Mahesh had been full of jokes about the project; but as soon as the stuff arrived he became deadly serious—he had become Bigburger” (Naipaul, *A Bend* 97). No doubt, we have a clear allusion to the relationship between subjectivity and capitalism. Bigburger changes Mahesh; he becomes further interpolated with capitalism and the West.

Moreover, look at how Bigburger changes his domestic worker. He goes from houseboy to chef. “Ildephonse, the houseboy, was taken from the flat and given a Bigburger chef’s cap and a yellow Bigburger jacket and put behind the counter. It was Mahesh’s idea to give Ildephonse a label for his jacket with his name and the designation—in English, for the extra style—Manager” (Naipaul, *A Bend* 98). Ildephonse’s position in the economy goes from the domestic space to the service industry. The nametag literally marks how Westernization reconstitutes Ildephonse’s subjectivity; he is re-named from servant to manager. Bigburger also reconfigures the geography. Salim states, “The whole prefabricated business did work; and it was great fun to be in Bigburger, to leave the sewer smells of the street, and the dust and the rubbish, and to step into this modern interior, with the advertisements and everything” (Naipaul, *A Bend* 97). He portrays Bigburger as a refuge from the disordered, smelly and
dangerous outside. The West reconditions the land and, in its repurposing, Africa is more bearable for our non-African African Salim.

However, the economic success is not to last in the country. Even the manifestations of Westernization cannot fully emerge unscathed by the political and civic unrest. Salim essentializes the country’s plunge into chaos and violence to Africa’s antiquity. In other words, he views Africa as inherently violent and chaotic. For example, in one instance, Salim states, “Africa, going back to its old ways with modern tools, was going to be a difficult place for some time” (Naipaul, A Bend 201). And in another example, he explains, “Old Africa, which seemed to absorb everything, was simple: this place kept you tense. What a strain it was, picking your way through stupidity and aggressiveness and pride and hurt” (Naipaul, A Bend 101). Any hindrance to Westernization and modernization in Africa, our narrator blames it on Africa’s allegedly innate brutal past.

We might be wondering what exactly in Old Africa keeps Salim tense? He never really gives us an adequate answer, but we might use his fear of Africa’s future to help discern his fear of the past. Salim “saw a disordered future for the country. No one was going to be secure [t]here; no man of the country was to be envied” (Naipaul, A Bend 102). It is disorder that worries him. Yet, another question emerges for us: why is the disorder so worrisome? It seems that for Salim, disorder is the absence of European dominance in Africa. Let’s remember that at the onset of the new president’s rule, he had Westerners present (like Raymond) to help him keep the country ordered and progressing. “Under the rule of our new President the miracle had occurred: Africans
had become modern men who built in concrete and glass and sat in cushioned chairs covered in imitation velvet. It was like a curious fulfillment of Father Huismans’ prophecy about the retreat of African Africa, and the success of the European graft” (Naipaul, A Bend 100-101). From this passage, we gather that order is synonymous with Western modernity. An ordered and modern Africa is an Africa governed by Europeans and their rule of law. Salim’s fear of Africa’s return to the past is the fear of a continent that has rejected colonialism and coloniality, that is, a continent where European hegemony and dominance is rejected.

In the novel, order/disorder is a Eurocentric dualism used to establish colonial differences. Take for example what Salim says about the president’s success in constructing a modern Africa. “He [the president] was creating modern Africa. He was creating a miracle that would astound the rest of the world. He was by-passing real Africa, the difficult Africa of bush and villages, and creating something that would match anything that existed in other countries” (Naipaul, A Bend 100). According to Salim, the miracle is Africa’s imitation of Europe. Such a view presupposes that Europe is the pinnacle of the world, and hence, it goes that the region should be imitated. For Salim, “there was only one civilization and one place—London” (Naipaul, A Bend 151). His claim is no surprise for those of us familiar with our author’s works because Naipaul himself has inferred that Western civilization should be universal. Thus, when Raymond is marginalized and when Indar leaves the country, it is no coincidence that the country enters into a state of disorder. To repeat, the absence of the West is the absence
of order—an order steeped in Eurocentrism and capitalism. So, what would be the logical next step for Naipaul’s narrator?

If you guess an exodus to Europe, you are correct. Salim heads to the only civilization he knows, London, where he attempts satiate his capitalist desires. Though, we must note that at the end of the novel, he barely escapes on the steamer—the same steamer that has brought all the development and Westerners to the region. See how Salim describes his escape. “We went on. Darkness fell. It was in this darkness that abruptly, with many loud noises, we stopped. There were shouts from the barge, the dugouts with us, and from many parts of the steamer. Young men with guns had boarded the steamer and tried to take her over. But they had failed” (Naipaul, *A Bend* 278). Darkness. Shouts. Guns. Disorder. The merchant escapes. It is Naipaul’s ending where we note the intertextuality with Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Darkness envelops the African continent—an association first conjured up by Conrad in his novel.

Yet, the last sentence of Naipaul’s novel rejects the darkness. “The searchlight, while it was on, had shown thousands, white in the white light” (Naipaul, *A Bend* 278). Naipaul uses whiteness here to describe the searchlight’s reflection on the insects and moths in the air. I want to propose an interpretation of his last sentence. The light that originates from the steamer—a symbol of modernization and capitalism—represents the West’s alleged guiding light towards progress. Let’s remind ourselves that Naipaul’s narrator is not bashful about his appreciation for the West. For me, the steamer’s light represents the West’s eventual return to the so-called dark continent. The ship goes upstream for now, but it will turn around. Naipaul concludes with the possibility of the
West’s return to Africa—a message that is not quite evident in the novel’s conclusion. However, when we read several passages together this is what we encounter. Although “Africa, going back to its old ways with modern tools, was going to be a difficult place for some time” (201), “business never dies in Africa; it is only interrupted” (24) (Naipaul, A Bend). In Naipaul’s view, the West’s order will return again, despite the interruption. The question remains, however, a return to develop Africa or to fail it once more.

**Dehumanizing/economizing the Human: Bio-economic Difference between the Traveler and the Migrant in Naipaul’s The Middle Passage**

Naipaul’s *The Middle Passage* is a firsthand account of his experiences during a trip back to the West Indies in 1960 and 1961. At the suggestion of Trinidad’s then Prime Minister Eric Williams, Naipaul travels to Trinidad, British Guiana, Suriname, Martinique and Jamaica. Beginning with the voyage from England to the West Indies, his travel narrative is a record of his encounters in and assessments of each place. For purposes here, I mainly focus on his first chapter: his description of the transatlantic journey to Trinidad.

Despite being his birthplace, Naipaul has harsh words for Trinidad, as John Thieme points out in his essay “Authorial Voice in V.S. Naipaul’s *The Middle Passage.*” “The first two chapters contain the work's most hostile observations on contemporary West Indians, including a racist reference to Indians and blacks as being ‘like monkeys pleading for evolution’ (87) in their aspirations towards whiteness” (Thieme 144).
Thieme proceeds to claim that Naipaul has a “tendency to present the West Indies as a static, unchanging world,” and “he subsequently affords numerous instances of a West Indies arrested in time, condemned to repeat the same experiences over and over again, without ever learning the lessons of history” (144-145). I agree with Thieme’s assessment of Naipaul’s work. The representation Naipaul portrays of the West Indies is, in some ways, similar to his portrayal of Africa in *A Bend in the River.*

If Naipaul strips any positive attribute from Trinidad and its inhabitants, it is not surprising then that he dehumanizes West Indians in the description of his journey from England to Trinidad in his first chapter “Middle Passage.” I would argue that the first chapter is the most indicative of Naipaul’s colonial/imperial gaze, and, thus, one of the strongest examples that support my argument that Naipaul is fully engaged in and constituted by the coloniality of power/knowledge. As a colonial/imperial agent, Naipaul establishes colonial difference among the ship’s passengers through his distinction of ‘traveler/migrant.’ He conjures up what I would call bio-economic re-constructions of West Indian subjectivities. I use this term to differentiate between the concepts “bare life” and “disposable life.” The former refers to the intersection between life and the political while latter connotes the juncture between life and the economic. Today, the intellectual arena is full of works that analyze the relationship between life, politics and economy. Michel Foucault might be the first to engage the question of biopolitics; however, since his work, other scholars have explored the concept, including but not limited to, Giorgio Agamben, Hannah Arendt, Carl Schmitt, Roberto Esposito and Michael Cohen. Yet, none of these scholars explicitly engage the question of *bios* in
relation to Quijano’s concept. Walter Mignolo does examine this intersection in his essay “Dispensable and Bare Lives: Coloniality and the Hidden Political/Economic Agenda of Modernity.”

Mignolo’s point of departure is the colonial matrix of power founded on racism, capitalism and Christianity. For him, the intersection between Christianity and racism establishes the social and ontological hierarchy that was instituted with the birth of the colonial/modern system and has continued today under the auspices of the coloniality of power/knowledge. For example, he attributes anti-Semitism in Nazi German and the commodification of human life in the capitalist world-system to the “racial matrix of the modern/colonial world” (Mignolo, “Dispensable” 74). For Mignolo, both the Holocaust and commodification of life are instances of human life becoming dispensable, hence his term “dispensable life.” He outlines two understands of the term; the first refers to the relationship between human life and economic paradigms while the second encapsulates the correlation between human life and legal/political paradigms. “Thus, dispensable lives are such either for economic reasons (commodity) or legal-state reasons (bare life)” (Mignolo, “Dispensable” 79). For purposes here, I recapitulate some of Mignolo’s arguments and examples regarding dispensable life and its relationship with the economic.

Mignolo argues that the commodification of human life occurs in the 16th century after the colonization of the Americas. For him, slavery is the most salient example of this form of dispensable life. The slave is dispensable as a commodity “because once a given enslaved-body is no longer labor-producing it can be replaced by another enslaved-
body” (Mignolo, “Dispensable” 74). The enslaved-body converts from subject to object upon his or her capture. Mignolo illustrates this point using an example from Ottobah Cugoano’s *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery*. Cugoano, a freed slave, writes about a grotesque experience on a slaving ship bound for the West Indies in 1780. The slavers decide to rid themselves of 132 sickly slaves in order to prevent any potential financial losses resulting from the slaves’ deaths. So, to ensure they recuperate their initial investment, the slavers throw them overboard and file a claim with their insurers (Mignolo, “Dispensable” 74). What else is Cugoano’s example other than an illustration of the objectification and commodification of life? It is no coincidence that slavery emerged as a large scale practice in the 16th century because, as Mignolo tells us, “[s]lavery, as a particular form of exploitation of labor, is consubstantial to capitalism” (“Dispensable” 75). The division of labor and exploitation drove and still drives the colonial/modern world-system. Yet, who divided labor and transformed life from subjects into objects?

As colonizers, Europeans held the power to re-name and control life; they had the power to make it dispensable based on the construction of race and racism. Thus, our relationship between race/labor becomes even further complex and enmeshed with the addition of the dispensability and commodification of human life to our colonial semantic chaining. Our chain now reads: race/labor/commodity/dispensability—each one controlled by Europe and interrelated and interdependent in constituting coloniality.

It so happened that human agents who controlled knowledge and money had the authority (not necessarily the power) to classify and manage sectors
of the human population. Their authority was an invisible structure that was nevertheless imprinted on their bodies and minds. That invisible structure has been described as “the colonial matrix of power” in its synchronic as well as diachronic dimensions. (Mignolo, “Dispensable” 75)

Perhaps we do not need the reminder, but the “colonial matrix of power” is Quijano’s term. Hence, the coloniality of power/knowledge re-maps the body and re-constitutes the meaning of life. The invention of race inscribes the body, and through race’s naturalization, social classification becomes possible. Put differently, life becomes dispensable. Mignolo writes that dispensable lives are “the consequences of the racist foundation of economic capitalist practices: cost reductions, financial gains, accumulation to re-invest to further accumulation, are economic goals that put human lives in second place. Racism is a necessary rhetoric in order to devalue, and justify, dispensable lives that are portrayed (by hegemonic powers) as less valuable” (“Dispensable” 81). With regard to Naipaul’s work, the question then becomes: does Naipaul use his power to name in order to create dispensable life?

I argue that our author continues the colonial practice of devaluing human life and transforming it into a commodity. The distinction between human life and dispensable life comes in Naipaul’s use of the terms “traveler” and “migrant,” terms he uses to differentiate (and hierarchize) the populations on the ship. For example, Naipaul describes the migrants on the ship as untamed beasts of burden whereas he, for the most part, represents the travelers as civilized individuals. From the very first sentence of The Middle Passage, we see how Naipaul distances himself from the West Indian ‘migrant.’
“There was such a crowd of immigrant-type West Indians on the boat-train platform at Waterloo that I was glad I was travelling first class to the West Indies” (Naipaul, Middle 1). Who are these immigrant-type West Indians? What do they look like? And how do they act? Analyzing the first several pages, we can figure out the answers to these questions, but let’s see how Wimal Dissanayake and Carmen Wickramagamage might respond, using what they say in their book Self and Colonial Desire: Travel Writings of V. S. Naipaul. Regarding the West Indian’s representation, they write the following: “[t]he picture is certainly negative. . . . Words such as ‘slow,’ ‘negligent,’ ‘slumped,’ and ‘drippled’ clearly demonstrate the negativity of the perception and clear a psychological space for his analysis of Trinidad later on” (27). Simply, these adjectives do not portray West Indians in a positive light. Such portraits of the migrants persist as we continue reading what Naipaul has to say about his journey aboard the ship—the Francisco Bobadilla—; however, there are West Indians who, for the most part, dodge Naipaul’s colonial/imperial eye, one of these individuals being Mr. MacKay.

On the ship, Naipaul befriends MacKay, who, like Naipaul, is traveling from England back to his birthplace. While MacKay is a contradictory individual (something Naipaul notes in his travel log), he is the consummate colonial/imperial subject. For instance, he is prejudiced against West Indians and blacks. Take for example what he says about the racial turmoil in England during the 1960’s: “‘You see how these black fellers going to England and stinking up the country,’ . . . ‘I mean, if a black feller want to get mad, he could stay home and get mad there’” (Naipaul, Middle 8). MacKay blames blacks for the unrest rather than the root of the problem, racism. Moreover, he
does not even fully accept the calls for racial tolerance at the time. He states that “all this talk about tolerance is alright” but then says, “English people forget that there is a type of black man –like the Jamaican– who is an animal” (Naipaul, *Middle* 10). Again, following MacKay’s logic, the disharmony between races is the non-European’s fault.

His point of view clearly establishes the link between coloniality and dehumanization. We just saw how he referred to some black Jamaicans as animals, and he goes even farther when he calls West Indians disembarking from the ship orangutans. “I’m not going to lie to you,” Mr. Mackay said. ‘When I saw that pack of orang-outangs getting off the ship at Southampton, I didn’t feel good. It was a damn frightening thing to see. You can’t blame some people for not wanting to call themselves West Indians’” (Naipaul, *Middle* 15). In other words, the West Indian is dispensable life; s/he is dehumanized; s/he is disposable. For us, MacKay’s feelings are an example of colonial shame—a construct implanted on non-European subjectivities via colonial difference--; he disqualifies and relegates his own subjectivity as a West Indian.

Yet, he cannot shake his double consciousness. MacKay knows that he is a colonial subject, always doomed to an inferior status. Naipaul writes: “Quite suddenly he [MacKay] was identifying himself with the black fellers. He was an old man; he had never risen to the top; superiors had always been imported from England” (Naipaul, *Middle* 8). MacKay’s contradictory, if not warring, behavior is an example of double consciousness. He sees himself within and outside of Eurocentrism. Nevertheless, he is a re-ordered subjectivity—a semblance that mimics a European one.
For our author, MacKay is also a traveler. Like Naipaul, MacKay travels; he does not migrate. The difference between traveler/migrant might seem small, but it is the difference between human life and dispensable life, between the colonial/imperial subject and the colonized object and between the self and the other. The trope of travel, and travel writing itself, has played an important role in establishing colonial difference. I agree with Dissanayake and Wickramagamage when they say “[i]ndeed, coloniality is the marker code of travel writing” (15). Their claim is that travel writing is part of the colonial project. It is a means through which coloniality is exerted and established. For both scholars, the travel writer has the power to re-order, to distort, to simplify, to domesticate and to other. This last ability—othering—is fundamental in establishing coloniality. Dissanayake and Wickramagamage are correct in pointing out that othering relies primarily on what they call “binarisms.” These binarisms include self/other, civilized/primitive, private/public, humanity/animality, maturity/immaturity, reason/emotion, etc. (Dissanayake and Wickramagamage 1-20). This all sounds familiar, doesn’t it? Thus, we must point out that travel writing is a colonial apparatus. It is the vehicle through which knowledge is ordered and constructed; it is a place where Eurocentrism is created and preserved; it is the site that invents and logs difference; ultimately, it is the site of power. “Travel writing needs to be perceived as a discourse where imperatives of knowledge and power intersect in a constitutively reciprocal manner. As with all discourses, travel writing is concerned with the production of knowledge” (Dissanayake and Wickramagamage 7). Consequently, the travel writer is a
colonial agent, going out to survey, order and territorialize in his or her fashion. The traveler (or the tourist, if you will) becomes a metonym for colonial/imperial agent.

Look how Naipaul describes the journey with and without the migrants. For him, the outward journey from England has an advantage. “On this outward journey there were few passengers, and most of those who lined the deck rails as we moved down the Solent were travelling tourists. . . . There were only nine first-class passengers, and we sat at three tables in one corner of the large shabby dining room” (Naipaul, Middle 5). Note how he does not use any term to connote migration. They are tourists/travelers headed out on a journey. Many of the people who Naipaul meets on the ship are not necessarily West Indian. For instance, Miss Tulls, an English woman, is on vacation, having mistakenly booked the journey thinking that the Francisco Bobadilla was a cruise ship. Another passenger is a young English Baptist missionary travelling to evangelize. The West Indian, however, is the migrant. The distinction becomes most apparent when the ship arrives to the West Indies and begins to board the passengers for the return trip. Naipaul describes the arrival to the first port in this manner: “A commotion, and some shouts, told us that the emigrants had arrived” (Naipaul, Middle 16). It is interruption, disorder and noise that our author associates with emigrants. This description is juxtaposed with the relatively tranquil journey so far.

Moreover, they arrive to the port at night. Having already reviewed A Bend in the River, this detail is an ominous one. Darkness again becomes a colonial trope.57

The men with the oars shouted occasionally, their voices dying quickly in the darkness. But from the passengers we heard no sound. Sometimes,
for a second or two, a face was upturned, examining the white ship. We saw women and children, dressed as for church. They all looked a little limp; they had been dressed for some time. The lights played on them, as if for their inspection. Beyond there was darkness. (Naipaul, Middle 17)

Naipaul’s description envelops the migrants in a shroud of darkness. The repetition serves its effect as a foreboding of an uncertain, perhaps dangerous, future. Naipaul then makes note that the police have boarded the ship to maintain order—a minor detail that conveys uncertainty and the potential for disorder. Then, the overt racism emerges from within the darkness. Naipaul writes: “‘Well!’ someone said loudly. I turned to see a tourist. We had not spoken during the voyage. ‘The holiday is over,’ he said. ‘The wild cows are coming on board’” (Naipaul, Middle 18). The traveler berates the migrant; human life is reduced to dispensable life—a practice that has been occurring since slavery’s introduction—, and Naipaul makes note of this fact.

*The wild cows are coming on board.* No attitude in the West Indies is new. Two hundred years before, when he would have been a slave, the tourist would have said the same. ‘The creole slaves,’ says a writer of 1805, ‘looked upon the newly imported Africans with scorn, and sustained in their turn that of the mulattoes, whose complexions were browner; while all were kept at a distance from the intercourse of the whites.’ On this ship only the Portuguese and the Indians were alien elements. Mr. Mackay and his black fellers, the tourist and the wild cows; these relationships had been fixed centuries before. (Naipaul, Middle 18)
The voyage from England to the Caribbean remains, for the most part, the same middle passage. Social classification and Eurocentrism used to sustain global capitalism continues to be the master narrative that dictates social relations. The migrant replaces the slave as the source of dispensable labor; likewise, the migrant ship replaces the slave ship.58

Once the emigrants are aboard, the atmosphere changes. Previously separated by the first-class and tourist compartments, all tourists congregate at the first-class bar. “The first-class bar was the only place of refuge, and to it now came many of the tourists who had come with us from Southampton. No one objected. There were now only two classes: travelers and emigrants” (Naipaul, *Middle* 18). The minor distinctions between the travelers disappear when confronted with the emigrants. Yet, what were the differences between the two groups? Naipaul is never completely forthright in stating them, but as readers, we can formulate an answer. For me, the difference is colonial. The differences between the travelers, as Dissanayake and Wickramagamage previously stated, are predicated upon dualisms that establish hierarchy. The non-European subject is relegated to an inferior domain, and this status is naturalized through reiterative acts. In fact, Naipaul’s travel narrative reiterates them. The reason why it is difficult to say where the difference comes from is because, as Quijano pointed out, the coloniality of power/knowledge hides itself in the supposed naturalization of hierarchy based on difference. The paradox is that the colonial difference emerges from the non-European subject. The once colonized subject becomes the colonial/imperial subject—the non-native native. By this I mean Naipaul is still the other. He is non-European; he is not
white. Nonetheless, he identifies with Europe; he perpetuates coloniality. Naipaul reiterates a Eurocentric locus of enunciation. He no longer sees himself as an emigrant; he is a traveler.

As I stated already, Mr. MacKay enjoys the traveler designation as well. This title might be perplexing for the reader given the fact that MacKay is migrating back to the West Indies for a permanent stay. Like Naipaul, MacKay too was an immigrant at one point. Why, then, is his description likened to that of a traveler? Why is MacKay humanized while the other West Indians are not? Despite the repetition, the difference again between the two groups is colonial. Mr. MacKay is a colonial/imperial subject; he is a vassal of the coloniality. Look once again at how he describes West Indian emigrants. “‘You see what I mean, Miss Tull,’ Mr. Mackay said. ‘You see how these beasts treat their own people? And he ain’t even get to England. When a few white fellers jump on him and mash his arse he will start bawling about color prejudice’” (Naipaul, *Middle Passage* 29). Even more compelling, MacKay and his wife are proud of their son for his assimilation into British society. This time it is Mrs. MacKay who reveals their Eurocentric positionality. She says this of her son: “‘He’s picking up all sorts of English habits,’ [she] said with pride. ‘Everything for him is a ‘flipping’ this and a ‘flipping’ that. I just can’t keep up with his English slang and English accent’” (Naipaul, *Middle 13*). In this way, the traveler becomes a euphemism for the colonial/imperial subject. The traveler/migrant duality is another method to classify and order subjects/objects within the colonial matrix of power. Naipaul’s *The Middle Passage* is an iteration of the coloniality.
I cannot help but include one final example before we move on to the analysis of *Half a Life*. The English librarian mistakenly on the ship, Miss Tull—the traveler—is left to fend for herself after Naipaul disembarks. Naipaul writes: “Miss Tull disappeared; seventeen days with the emigrants awaited her” (*Middle* 32). There is nothing innocent about his description, his juxtaposition of images or his syntax. The statement was crafted to disqualify, to make life dispensable. Naipaul’s novel, *Half a Life*, does not deviate far from a colonial/modern world and all the violence that this constellation of power engenders.

*Warring, Violent Ideals: Imperfect Subjectivities in Naipaul’s Half a Life*

White/black, male/female, metropolis/bush, European/non-European, empire/colony; all these colonial/modern dualisms inform our narrator’s horizon of expectations in one of Naipaul’s most recent novels, *Half a Life*. In my opinion, the novel may be new, but it contains the same old story. It engenders a disparaging view of non-European societies, reaffirms the division between the so-called First and Third Worlds and represents non-European subjectivities in an unflattering, imperfect manner. Although Naipaul published *Half a Life* in 2002, he chooses to set the novel around the same time of his previous works—during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. It seems that Naipaul cannot shed his affinity for colonial life and his concern over the alleged disorder that the independence movements caused.
While I was reading this novel, I could not help myself from thinking about Rubén Darío—a subject with a divided consciousness. My argument was that Darío was, for the most part, a colonial subject who had instances where he broke with his Eurocentric locus of enunciation to challenge that paradigm that had informed and constituted him. I had opened that chapter with Du Bois’ concept of double consciousness. The same concept also helps us understand Naipaul’s novel. The narrative captures the struggle between “two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body” (Du Bois 7). Yet, one of these ideals, one of these souls, one of these strivings wins out in Naipaul’s novel. The other ideal never really has a chance. The novel chronicles the life of an Indian writer, Willie Chandran, who never escapes his Eurocentric conception of self and thus, wanders aimlessly through life always seeing himself as an imperfect, incomplete and halved subject. I must point out that everything (except all things Europe) is halved in Naipaul’s novel.

*Half a Life* opens in an unnamed province in India during the first half of the 20th century. Readers find themselves reading not about the novel’s protagonist but rather the protagonist’s father, an Indian of Brahmin caste who disgraced his family and caste by marrying a woman from a backward caste. From this beginning chapter, the reader already gleans an unflattering picture of India. Chandran’s father’s story reveals a society that revolves around a rigid social structure that marginalizes groups of people. As his father recounts his past, he interrupts his story with short, yet telling, commentaries about the country. For instance, he explains his rationale for marrying the woman from a lower caste. “My decision was simple. It was to turn my back on our
 ancestr y, the foolish, foreign-ruled starveling priests my grandfather had told me about, to turn my back on all my father’s foolish hopes for me as someone high the maharaja’s service, all the foolish hopes of the college principal to have me marry his daughter” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 12). Whether or not there is justification for the social rigidity that stratifies Indian society, his transgression represents a disregard for traditional Indian society.

In this sense, he turns his back on India, and there are consequences for his actions: the fruits of his so-called illegitimate relationship have no place in India. Both his children, Willie and Sarojini, have a gloomy future if they stay in the country. Chandran’s father knows this, realizing that his daughter’s only chance for a good life is outside of India. “... [F]oreigners have their own ideas of beauty and certain other things, and all I can hope for Sarojini is an international marriage” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 35). For Willie, India becomes a place he seeks to escape. He despises his father and his culture. These feelings manifest themselves throughout the novel, and he often blames his Indian heritage as reasons for his faults, even for his lackluster sexual performances, for instance.

Naipaul, too, appears to despise India, for that matter. In an interview in 1981 with Bharati Mukherjee and Robert Boyens, Naipaul comments that India irritates him given its inability to become a global power. Naipaul says:

What I want is for India to regard itself as a big country. It should be doing something in the world. It should have high standards of achievement. A country with 600 to 700 million people which is now
offering the world nothing but illegitimate holy men should be ashamed of itself… And I do want you to see that I don’t dismiss them because they’re too far away. I am very sad they’ve made themselves so negligible in the world. (Mukherjee and Boyens 20)

Naipaul is measuring India with a Eurocentric yardstick. He criticizes the country for its lack of achievement; yet, he does not acknowledge its colonial past. Until 1947, the country was under colonial rule—a relatively short period since the date of the interview in 1981. By not mentioning India’s colonial past, Naipaul is negating all the negated subjectivities during colonialism and after in the form of coloniality. Nonetheless, part of Naipaul’s criticism of India appears to be with its traditional social structure itself.

Even in India, Chandran and his sister were half-lives—progeny of two castes, two different worlds. They did not have a place in the subcontinent. So, like Naipaul, Chandran flees his homeland to go study in London—his first migration of several. Upon his arrival, Chandran becomes disillusioned with the allegedly great city. Newly installed in the city, when he “began walking about its streets he felt let down… He was disappointed by Buckingham Palace. He thought the maharaja’s palace in his own state was far grander, more like a palace, and this made him feel, in a small part of his heart, that the kings and queens of England were impostors, and the country a little bit of a sham” (Naipaul, Half a Life 50). For our protagonist, London does not live up to the Eurocentric myths propagated around the world, say, its illustrious reputation in India. After all, we learn in the first chapter that Chandran is named after a famous English author (an author whose full name escapes us in the novel). At the onset, his time in
London is marked by new friendships, sexual endeavors and a fledgling career as a writer and journalist.

Chandran saw his time in London as a new beginning. “No one he met, in the college or outside it, knew the rules of Willie’s own place, and Willie began to understand that he was free to present himself as he wished. He could, as it were, write his own revolution. The possibilities were dizzying. He could, within reason, re-make himself and his past and his ancestry” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 57). In other words, he was free from his ‘backward’ and isolated homeland. The narrator tells us that Chandran found himself ignorant of life outside of India. “Willie thought he was swimming in ignorance, had lived without a knowledge of time” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 53). Put differently, India exists in a different time—a temporal difference that relegates the country. It is as if Chandran’s departure from India opens up the world to him. He is free to move around and do what he pleases, or so he believes. With the prospect of this ‘freedom,’ the narrator states that when he started “playing with words, he began to re-make himself. It excited him, and began to give him a feeling of power” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 58). This isn’t the first time we see Naipaul link narrative and subjectivity together. Our author knows the power of his literature in shaping subjectivities and iterating or rejecting Eurocentrism. In this instance, our narrator highlights narrative as a mechanism of liberation, but we know full well that narrative can serve liberation’s antonym: domination. Either way, narration becomes a means to (re)order.

His experience as a writer and journalist in London is not much different from his days back in the Indian mission school run by Canadians. As a young student in India,
Chandran learned to write by manipulating the relationships between the local and the global. He became skilled at fitting local configurations into a Western framework—a practice that his Canadian teachers relished. Young Chandran’s practice originated from his desire to escape India.

He began to long to go to Canada, where his teachers came from. He even began to think he might adopt their religion and become like them and travel the world teaching. And one day, when he was asked to write an English ‘composition’ about his holidays he pretended he was a Canadian, with parents who were called ‘Mom’ and ‘Pop.’ Mom and Pop had one day decided to take the kids to the beach… (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 38)

The composition received high marks from his Western superiors. So, in London, when a producer of the BBC asks him to write a script on the small Christian community that Chandran had invented during a talk with the same producer, Chandran knew exactly what to write. He writes “the talk in less than two hours. It was like being at the mission school again: he knew what was expected of him” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 74). He knows what the West wanted to hear. He can imagine India from a Western perspective.

While Chandran attends school and produces the occasional BBC script, he writes a series of short stories about India. One of his acquaintances whom he befriends in England, Roger, encourages Chandran to try to publish the works. Chandran is receptive to the idea and sends the stories off to publishers in London. However, several publishing houses reject the manuscript. His friend, Roger, believes there is a reason for the rejections. He says: “‘It’s as I feared. …India isn’t really a subject. The only people
who are going to read about India are people who have lived or worked there, and they are not going to be interested in the India you write about. The men want John Masters—*Bhowani Junction* and *Bugles and a Tiger*—and the women want *Black Narcissus* by Rumer Godden” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 96-97). There is little to no interest to read about topics outside of the empire, and when there is, the British audience wants it told from a Western perspective and a Western subject. Chandran’s freedom to narrate himself and his homeland is not easy as he first thought.

What is important to note is that the short stories Chandran writes are not solely based off his experiences and knowledge of homeland. He continues his mission school tradition of writing when he pens the short stories. However, rather than situate Indians in the West, he places Westerners in India. He uses archetypes, scenes, themes and plots from movies he sees in England or his personal experiences there and sets them in India, masking anything blatantly British or Western to fit an Indian landscape. For example, after a dinner party at Roger’s house, Chandran writes a story using one of the party attendees, a portly newspaper editor. Chandran “sets it in the quarter-real Indian town he used in his writing, and he fitted the editor to the holy man he had already written about in some stories” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 95). The stories are hybrid ones; they follow Naipaul’s overarching theme of half-life. Nonetheless, Chandran’s play between geographies and cultures does not yield him the literary success he expected. Eurocentrism appears to squash any chance of it. Eventually, Chandran and Roger find a publisher willing to publish the book, and the publication opens the door for the next stage in his half-life.
At Home with Coloniality: Racism, Second-Class Subjectivities and Eurocentrism in

Half a Life

After his book’s publication, Chandran receives a letter from a woman from an unnamed African country. The woman, Ana, has read his book and would like to meet him in person. She finds herself relating to the book’s contents. Below is an excerpt from her letter to Chandran.

At school we were told that it was important to read, but it is not easy for people of my background and I suppose yours to find books where we can see ourselves. We read this book and that book and we tell ourselves we like it, but all the books they tell us to read are written for other people and really we are always in somebody else’s house and we have to walk carefully and sometimes we have to stop our ears at the things we hear people say. I feel I had to write to you because in your stories for the first time I find moments that are like moments in my own life, though the background and material are so different. (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 116)

As readers of Naipaul’s novel, we are baffled by the letter’s content given that the letter writer distinguishes Chandran’s novel from the other books they were told to read (i.e. books written by Western authors). The letter too surprises him. He does not know whether or not he should tell his admirer that the stories are hybrid one. Perhaps the “the woman or girl with the Portuguese-sounding name might understand that the Indian
stories in which she had seen aspects of her own African life had been borrowed from old Hollywood movies and the Maxim Gorky trilogy from Russia” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 117). Either way, as we see in the letter above, the woman identifies with Chandran’s writing. What can we say is behind this identification?

Chandran wonders if Ana comes from a mixed community or, like him, a “half-and-half position” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 117). This halfness, or incompleteness, is due to colonization. Both Chandran and Ana grow up in colonial societies where European countries have attempted to re-shape local geographies and subjectivities. They both become the ‘other’ in their respective homelands. They are left to read about themselves from the colonizer’s perspective. At first glance, we as readers might react as Chandran did: the short stories were not ‘authentically’ Indian. They were hybrid, a conglomeration of European and Indian landscapes and subjectivities. However, in her letter, Ana never claims the stories to be ‘authentic.’ Rather, she states that she can identify with the stories, and hence, the author. They both are trapped within coloniality, doomed to a second-class status no matter their success. Coloniality always challenges their ontology and place in the world. This connection does not really surface until the very end of the novel when Chandran tells Ana he is leaving Mozambique, and he does not want her to accompany him. He says to her, “And even if we go to Portugal, even if they let me in there, it would still be your life. I have been hiding too long” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 211). Though, Chandran is mistaken in his assessment of Ana—a mistake that Ana gently corrects. “Perhaps it wasn’t really my life either,” she says (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 211). In other words, both are caught within the matrix of coloniality; both
live lives inhibited by a constellation of power that privileges the European conception of the world over all others. Her letter (and ultimately their relationship) establishes transoceanic connections between (former) European colonies. However, their relationship is not the only one that demonstrates the transoceanic nature of coloniality.

In London, Chandran meets a fellow student whose own understanding of his race/identity is initially colonial. Like Chandran, Percy Cato is studying at the London university on scholarship. Originally from Jamaica, he is of mixed descent. The narrator tells us that Cato is more brown than black. Early in the novel, Cato repeats racist discourses. Take, for example, what he says to Chandran during one of their early encounters. He says: “The Negro is actually recessive” (Naipaul, *Half Life* 59). Chandran is baffled by this response initially, but through an encounter with a different individual in London, he learns what the statement means.

At a dinner party with Roger, Chandran meets Marcus. Before the party, Roger tells Chandran that Marcus is the son of a man who, participating in the Back to Africa movement, emigrated from the West Indies to West Africa. According to Roger, Marcus is obsessed with sex. Roger tells Chandran: “When we first met in West Africa his talk was almost always all about sex. To keep my end up I said that African women were attractive. He said, ‘If you like the animal thing’” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 84). Marcus himself avoids Africa and anyone or anything that reminds him of his roots. For him,

London is paradise. He has two ambitions. The first is to have a grandchild who will be pure white in appearance. He is half-way there. He has five mulatto children, by five white women, and he feels that all he
has to do now is keep an eye on the children and make sure they don’t let him down. He wants when he is old to walk down the King’s Road with this white grandchild… His second ambition is to be the first black man to have an account at Coutts. That’s the Queen’s bank. (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 84-85)

At the dinner party, Marcus explains the alleged recessive nature of blackness. He says, “In the eighteenth century there were about half a million black people in England. They’ve all vanished. They disappeared in the local population. They were bred out. The Negro gene is a recessive one. If this were more widely known there would be a good deal less racial feeling that there is” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 89). This is not the only time that Marcus makes the same argument during the dinner party. Later, when the dinner attendees discuss Buenos Aires, he is sure that add that in 1800, there was a large black population in the city and in Uruguay. Yet, he explains that “[t]hey disappeared in the local population. They were bred out. The Negro gene is recessive. Not many people know that” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 91). Again, we see the connection between science and race that Quijano laid out in his discussion on Linnaeus.

In this case, science is complicit with racism. The term “recessive” itself is a term that connotes inferiority or weakness while its genetic counterpart—“dominant”—explicitly connotes dominance. Thus, the dualism “dominant/recessive” becomes interpolated with race to engender social classification through racial discrimination. What is most notable perhaps in the case of a young Cato and Marcus is that, while although they are black, they believe the myth of genetic racial inferiority. We have
quite an example here of the pernicious effects of the coloniality of power/knowledge on non-European subjects. On one hand, we have the character of Marcus who wants to negate his ontological status as the ‘other.’ He wants to be recognized as a member of the colonial empire, hence his ambition to hold a bank account at the Queen’s bank. On the other, we have the character of Cato who eventually moves from the colonial paradigm of thought to an anti-colonial one. Chandran’s friend might be the most dynamic character in the novel. His character demonstrates a progression in thought that begins within a Eurocentric, racist framework and evolves into the rejection of it. Cato ultimately leaves London and, as Sarojini tells Chandran in a letter, joins Che Guevara in South America. Later on, we learn again more information about Cato through Chandran’s sister. According to her, he became full of rage and even “‘reached the Pol Pot position’” (Naipaul, Half a Life 130). By “Pol Pot position,” she refers to Cato’s rage towards the Spanish. She says: “‘He thought the Spaniards had raped and looted the continent in the most savage way, and no good could come out of the place until all the Spaniards or part-Spaniards were killed’” (Naipaul, Half a Life 130). In other words, Cato reaction’s is a fundamentalist response to coloniality and the ontological negation of non-Europeans in this specific constellation of power.

In “Transmodernity, border thinking, and global coloniality: Decolonizing political economy and postcolonial studies,” Ramón Grosfoguel identifies two Third World responses to the Eurocentric matrix of power: nationalism and fundamentalism. For him, both are problematic because they do not break with the coloniality of power/knowledge. In the case of Third World nationalisms, the European concept of the
nation-state reproduces the same paradigm and marginalization. Third World nationalisms “reproduces an internal coloniality of power within each nation-state and reifies the nation-state as the privileged location of social change” (Grosfoguel 16). Third World fundamentalism also reproduces the same logic of coloniality, specifically in the form of dualisms. For Grosfoguel, Third World fundamentalisms “are ‘anti-modern modern’ forces that reproduce the binary oppositions of Eurocentric thinking” (16). In Cato’s case, he flips the dualities that inform the coloniality. All Spanish and their descendents become the enemy and, thus, must be eliminated. Even though Naipaul is a Westernized subject caught in Eurocentric thinking, his description of Cato marks a commonality between the de-colonial project of which Grosfoguel is a member. Both appear to acknowledge that violent fundamentalism does not work in dismantling coloniality and re-ordering the world with a more inclusive, just and equal world.

Fundamentalism is the coloniality of power/knowledge in a different landscape, re-ordered to fit the objectives (generally anti-European) of a particular group. Thus, for Grosfoguel, “[o]ne of the many plausible solutions to the Eurocentric versus fundamentalist dilemma is what Walter Mignolo, following Chicano(a) thinkers such as Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) and Jose David Saldivar (1997), calls ‘critical border thinking’ (Mignolo 2000)” (16). By critical border thinking, Grosfoguel means an epistemic response that emerges from the subaltern subjectivities silenced in coloniality/modernity. Critical border thinking does not reject modernity like fundamentalism but rather looks to redefine concepts like democracy, citizenship, human rights and humanity. It looks beyond a Eurocentric modernity to a decolonized one where subaltern epistemologies
hold equal weight to the European one. In other words, there is no global hierarchy based on dualities, social classification and capitalism.

The important difference between Naipaul and the Latin American Modernity/Coloniality Research Program is that Naipaul privileges a Eurocentric epistemology over all others. In his essay “V. S. Naipaul, Postcolonial Mandarin,” Rob Nixon also notes this tendency in Naipaul’s works. “His attitude to imperialism has, however, been contradictory: disliking the effects of imperialism, he tends to find imperial ideas more compelling than those which have braced anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles” (Nixon 113). We must note that Naipaul does sound very similar to Dario here. Nonetheless, Naipaul’s criticism of Third World fundamentalisms (demonstrated through his character Cato) is a criticism he is unwilling to make against the West—something Nixon also notes in another of Naipaul’s works *The Enigma of the Arrival*. Nixon charges him with avoiding any criticism of London. “Naipaul’s angle, ingenious yet perverse, screens out the violent decrepitude of London and Birmingham’s inner cities as well as the monumental industrial collapse of the rusting north…” (Nixon 104). While Naipaul briefly addresses the racism that persists in London in the 1950s and 1960s in London (i.e. the race riots of 1958) in *Half a Life*, he focuses most of his criticism on Mozambique and India. Again, like Nixon sustains, London’s deficiencies or problems are, for the most part, left undeveloped.

For Naipaul, non-European subjects are relegated to be half, second-class citizens. He cannot move beyond dualistic thinking. This thinking is best illustrated in his description of Chandran’s experiences in Mozambique before independence in the 1970s.
Chandran decides he cannot survive in London and pleads with Ana to move. He wants to return with her to her home in the Portuguese colony. Once there, the couple surrounds themselves with friends who share the same precarious position between colony and empire. Ana’s states this about her friends: “They are the second-rank Portuguese. That is how they are considered officially, and that is how they consider themselves. They are second rank because most of them have an African grandparent, like me…” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 136). Put differently, Ana and her friends accept their supposedly inferior status in a Eurocentric world. For Chandran, this second-class community brings him comfort. He is in a community of subjectivities who do not quite belong in colonial or de-colonial worlds. Yet, they all identify with the colonial world; they see colonial order as a source of protection and comfort. Soon after his arrival, Chandran comments that “at the moment that regulated colonial world seemed rock solid to everybody. And that was the world in which, for the first time, I found a complete acceptance” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 136). It appears that he is at peace with his Eurocentric ontological anchor—just like our author.

Like *A Bend in the River*, Naipaul describes Africa with the same Conradian imagery as before. Throughout the novel, there are several references to the same darkness that Salim described in the earlier work. Chandran comments at one point, referring to Africa, “darkness here was darkness” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 162). He and Ana do not venture from their estate and when they do, he is quick to point out that they are entering the bush. For Chandran, the landscape distinguishes the social structure within the colony. The houses that dot the landscape reflect the social position of its
occupants—a position that is closely associated with race. Those of mixed race often are employed as overseers of the estates (ones like Ana’s). The people of mixed race—the overseers—often live in homes of concrete. According to Chandran, “only the concrete of their houses separated the overseers from the Africans all around. African thatch and wattle was ordinary, concrete stood for dignity” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 137). Thus, just as phenotype becomes a discriminatory marker within the colonial matrix of power, so too does the dwelling place become an apparatus of discrimination. The relationship between the estate/concrete house/thatch and wattle dwellings distinguishes between second-class Portuguese, the mixed races and Africans. Again, Africa and its progeny fall to the bottom of the global hierarchy.

Amidst this darkness, second-class citizens can supposedly succeed. The Portuguese colony may have “looked open and wild, but it had all been charted and parceled out” (*Half a Life* 134). Ana’s friends, Jacinto and Carla Correia, benefit from this re-ordering. As a middleman, Jacinto Correia helps import and sell products in the colony. He becomes involved with a “great man” in the capital, or as Chandran explains, “a proper Portuguese” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 159). As a result, the Correias see their bank accounts grow. The couple has accounts all over the world. They fear an eventual demise in the colony and are prepared to leave at any moment. The colony has been good to them financially, but they are pessimistic about the future. For them, there is neither a future in the colony nor in Portugal for that matter. 62 “They lived with the idea of a great disaster about to happen. They were not sure what this disaster was going to be, whether it was going to be local or worldwide, but they felt it was going to do away
with their security both in Africa and Portugal” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 151). Our narrator explains that the Correias’ understanding of the world coincides with their positionality between two worlds: between the colony and the empire. Their belief of impending doom “was a moral idea and way of self-absolution, a way of living in the colony and at the same time standing outside of it” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 163). As second-class Portuguese, they are in the colony to exploit it before the alleged disaster hit. For the couple, the calamity does occur, but it is a result of their unscrupulous business practices with the “great man.” Although they survive the ensuing scandal, Correia and his wife leave Mozambique for Portugal. There is no future for them in colony.63

Their exodus is much like Salim’s in *A Bend in the River*. Sensing impending disaster, all three flee the colony. It is no coincidence also that the Correias’ departure occurs shortly before Mozambique’s independence. The colonial structure begins to unravel. As the guerrillas begin to gain more power, the growing resistance movement literally and figuratively shits on the colonial order. One night as Ana prepares to retire for the evening, she notices that someone has defecated on her bed. It emerges that one of her servants is the culprit, and when Ana confronts her and tells her never to return, the servant replies, “It’s not for you to tell me not to come back. I may come back one day, and sooner than you think. And I’ll not be staying in the [servant] quarters then” (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 205). Shortly after, in the progression of the novel, the guerrillas gain independence from Portugal, and it is at this time that Chandran leaves the former colony. He decides to move to Germany to live with his sister. He has wasted the best part of his life in the colony. “But now the best part of my life has gone, and I’ve done
nothing,” he says to Ana (Naipaul, *Half a Life* 211). In other words, there is no future for him in Africa just like our Salim in his town at the bend of the river. The decolonization movement destroys that sense of security he felt living under colonial rule. His return to Europe is a logical next step, for he is a subject complacent with Eurocentrism. Despite his claim that he has not lived his life the way he wanted, he is at home with coloniality. Any future for him is in Europe—one of Naipaul’s messages we cannot ignore as readers. Is it that surprising that all three works analyzed here always includes a return trip to the empire? Not if we trace Naipaul’s life. His trips to the periphery also concluded with a return to the center.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how Naipaul’s works engage and are complicit with coloniality. Each of the three narratives is a narrative of the coloniality of power/knowledge. By this, I mean Naipaul relies on Eurocentrism, social classification and global capitalism to construct his narrative worlds. Each is a discursive reiteration of coloniality. His stories are colonial/imperial constructs that disqualify non-European subjectivities and landscapes and replicate some of the same colonizing methods that Quijano identifies: dualisms, naturalization of difference and temporal-spatial distortions. Analyzing Naipaul’s works helps us to better identify the role of knowledge, meaning and its accumulation in the construction of subjectivities and geographies interpolated in colonial difference. Naipaul orders his novels for a Western reader, to be more precise a
Western, Eurocentric reader. He has no qualms with this fact as he has stated so in interviews. He does not write for Indians or Africans because he claims they do not read.⁶⁴

Without a doubt, Naipaul is an excellent writer. He is able to craft a story in a way that most authors are unable to do. Yet, as he told James Atlas in an interview, writing does not come easy for him. He continually is “‘fighting the Monkey side of [his] nature’” as he put it (Atlas 105). Such statements reveal his Eurocentric locus of enunciation. He sees the world through a paradigm of coloniality. As Chinua Achebe states in an interview with Jane Wilkinson in 1987, Naipaul is a “case of a brilliant writer who sold himself to the West. And one day he’ll be ‘rewarded’ with maybe a Nobel Prize or something” (Achebe 140). Achebe’s foreboding became a reality in 2002.

Nevertheless, if Naipaul employs a colonial/imperial gaze, what is the other side of the coin? How can literature be de-colonial? To answer this question and conclude the chapter, I finish with several passages from Gloria Anzaldúa’s Borderlands/La Frontera. To be de-colonial, we can use what Anzaldúa says in her last chapter “La conciencia de la mestiza/Towards a Mestiza Consciousness.” First, she states that we must recognize injustice, exploitation and inequality that have existed in a Eurocentric world for the past 500 years and seek to overcome it. “We need to say to white society: We need you to accept the fact that Chicanos are different, to acknowledge your rejection and negation of us. We need you to own the fact that you looked upon us as less than human, that you stole our lands, our personhood, our self-respect” (Anzaldúa 107-108). That is, we must admit that the coloniality of power/knowledge constitutes our world today. Though, she
does not believe that it is only contingent upon whites to overcome the colonial matrix of power. Rather, she sees the fight for a better world as a fight for all. “Many feel that whites should help their own people rid themselves of race hatred and fear first. I, for one, choose to use some of my energy to serve as mediator. I think we need to allow whites to be our allies” (Anzaldúa 107). Second, Anzaldúa proposes an alternative to coloniality: a mestiza consciousness.

A mestiza consciousness challenges coloniality at its core. It rejects dualisms and difference. There are no half-lives in a mestiza consciousness. Light and darkness are not used to disqualify. “Either/or” has no place in her proposal. Her paradigm does not ‘tolerate’ ambiguity; rather, it celebrates it. The mestiza consciousness does not worry about order or naming. Renaming does not necessarily mean to re-settle; rather, renaming means to stir up. “Soy un amasamiento, I am an act of kneading, of uniting and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meaning” (Anzaldúa 103). In other words, Africa, the Caribbean and India do not have to be places of darkness, as Naipaul wants them to be. They can be both if they would like, and there is nothing out of order with that.
Chapter 4

De-Colonial Becomings: Coloniality of Gender and the Coloniality of Death in Simone Schwarz-Bart’s The Bridge of Beyond and Between Two Worlds

“There has been much written about Guadeloupean author Simone Schwarz-Bart’s works, particularly in relation to creolization and its theoretical variations, and rightly so, for Schwarz-Bart throws many ingredients into the narrative pot; the ingredients congeal to such a degree that they become difficult to separate. She has an ability to take two seemingly opposed ideas or paradigms (that is, ingredients) and make them complement each other. For example, as Alexie Tcheuyap points out in “Creolist Mystification: Oral Writing in the Works of Patrick Chamoiseau and Simone Schwarz-Bart,” Schwarz-Bart interweaves orality throughout the narrative in the form of proverbs and poems (51). The melding of the two creates a highly lyrical, dialogical text that makes the reading process delicious. Yet, the oral-written aspect is not the only example, many others have noted the seemingly distinct aspects blended into one, and many other have tried to make sense

“According to them, people turned into dogs and crabs as naturally as water turned into ice, or as electricity was changed into lights in lamps or into words and music on the radio. In their view Ma Justina was just a little slice of life which wasn’t mentioned in books because the white men had decided to draw a veil over it” (Schwarz-Bart, Between 25).

“Being alive and dead at the same time, he belonged to both worlds yet was to both a stranger, as incongruous and out of place on earth as if he had fallen down from a star” (Schwarz-Bart, Between 212).
of Schwarz-Bart’s concoction using various symbols: roots, rhizomes and even spider webs.\textsuperscript{65} In Schwarz-Bart’s works, identifying neat, orderly dualisms—like the ones that prop up coloniality—is a difficult task. She does not privilege one side of duality over the other. Take gender for example. If her first novel has a female protagonist, her second has a male; she does not commit herself to just one.

Nonetheless, when we compare her works with V.S. Naipaul’s, we do see a difference. If Naipaul paints a gloomy picture of the Caribbean in his works, Simone Schwarz-Bart’s portrait adds sunshine to his darkness. Within her texts, the reader does not feel the palpable disdain for the region like in Naipaul’s; rather, her works celebrate the complexities that the region engenders. There is no escape from the islands instead, a return. Born in 1938 (six years after Naipaul) in France, Schwarz-Bart has spent much of her life in the Caribbean, specifically on the island of Guadeloupe. When she was three, her family returned to the island, and besides time in France, Switzerland and Senegal, Guadeloupe has remained her home (Jones xv). During her career as a writer, she coauthored her first book with her husband, \textit{Un plat de porc aux bananes vertes}, in 1967. She would later go on to publish her own novels \textit{Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle (The Bridge of Beyond)} and \textit{Ti Jean L’horizon (Between Two Worlds)}, in 1972 and 1979, respectively.\textsuperscript{66} In 1987, she published a play \textit{Ton beau capitaine (Your Handsome Captain)}, and in the 1980’s, she and her husband published a series of encyclopedias titled \textit{In Praise of Black Women}. Much literary criticism has been published in French and English over her works.
As I was reading the criticism for her works for this chapter, I came across the term “anti-colonial.” In Gerise Herndon’s essay “Anti-Colonialist and Womanist Discourse in the Works of Jamaica Kincaid and Simone Schwarz-Bart,” she argues that *The Bridge of Beyond* is an anti-colonial text. Reading this, I immediately wondered: what are the differences, if any, between the terms “anti-colonial” and “de-colonial?” I then thought: can a work be anti-colonial and de-colonial at the same time? And, is it even important to note a distinction between the two? For me, attempting to address these questions was fundamental in my location of Schwarz-Bart’s works within or outside of the colonial matrix of power. In other words, formulating a response to these questions helped me decide whether or not Schwarz-Bart worked within a logic of coloniality—either in its support or simple rejection. So, in my opinion, what then is the difference between the two terms?

Gloria Anzaldúa, with whom I concluded the last chapter, might best embody the notion of de-coloniality with her concept of *mestiza* consciousness. The prefix ‘de’ connotes an undoing or an unraveling of sorts, and this unraveling engenders the *mestiza* consciousness.

The work of *mestiza* consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended. The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originate in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our language, our thoughts. A massive uprooting of
dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence, of war. (Anzaldúa 102)

Anzaldúa’s text not only confronts and opposes coloniality but also provides alternatives to it. De-coloniality, thus, rejects coloniality and seeks for alternatives.

Walter Mignolo has outlined a way to achieve a break from colonial thinking in his Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking. Using Anzaldúa and others as a guide, he proposes a type of thinking that he calls “border thinking.” For him, border thinking is “thinking from dichotomous concepts rather than ordering the world in dichotomies” (Mignolo, Local Histories 85; author’s emphasis). Border thinking challenges coloniality from subaltern loci of enunciation, opening the world to new paradigms of thought, positionality and intersubjectivity. Thus, by de-coloniality, I understand the term to mean an opposition to coloniality and its eventual debasement through alternative paradigms of thought that break with coloniality’s logic.

Nelson Maldonado-Torres’ definition of de-coloniality appears different from mine. If we think back to the second chapter, I cited his definition. For convenience, let me cite it here again. For him, de-coloniality is “a confrontation with the racial, gender, and sexual hierarchies that were put in place or strengthened by European modernity as it colonized and enslaved populations through the planet. In short, with decolonization I am thinking of oppositions to the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being . . .” (Maldonado-Torres 261). His definition sounds much like what we could conjecture up
as a definition of anti-colonial. The prefix “anti” connotes opposition, rejection and confrontation—terms that Maldonado-Torres employs. Thus, using his definition, it appears synonymous with anti-colonial. It reads that de-coloniality is simply the confrontation and opposition to the coloniality of power/knowledge. In my understanding of the term, this opposition and confrontation must come in the form of alternative paradigms that debase coloniality’s foundation, Anzaldúa’s *mestiza* consciousness being an example. Coloniality’s rejection results in its displacement.

For me, “anti-colonial” means simply an opposition to the empire. Coloniality’s framework is not debased; rather, the opposition still operates within the colonial framework. Take, for example, the Négritude movement. The movement appropriated the French derogatory racial term and attempted to re-signify it. If, in France, to be black (meaning of African descent) carried with it a negative social and cultural connotation, Césaire and others like Leopold Senghor inverted this relationship between phenotype and social classification. Négritude is an outright rejection of racism instituted through the construction of race. In other words, the movement is a rejection of Eurocentrism and racism. Yet, to a certain extent Négritude still recognizes social classification; it relies on a world ordered and hierarchized by race. The movement tries to undo the hierarchy, but the members are doing so by coloniality of power/knowledge’s rules. Put simply, the duality white/non-white is still relevant.

Anti-colonial thinkers oppose the system, yet they have not quite cognitively unraveled themselves from the system that subjugates, exploits and even negates them. Therefore, it reads that anti-colonial (in the coloniality sense) refers to the opposition or
rejection of capitalism, Eurocentrism and/or social classification through a means or an end that still follows the logic of the coloniality of power/knowledge in some manner. While this may seem straightforward, we must remember how enmeshed these domains are in coloniality’s construction.

Additionally, I understand anti-colonial in the colonialist sense, meaning colonialism. Many anti-colonial thinkers are writing from a place of colonization. Their project is not only to reject psychological, social, cultural and religious coloniality, but also to fight for political independence from the remaining European empires. Anti-colonial then can refer to anti-colonialism—a rejection of political domination. In this chapter, I will use the articulation ‘(anti-)colonial’ to show that ‘anti-colonial’ is still caught in coloniality.

Having now ruminated over the two terms, anti-colonial and de-colonial, I can now plant this chapter’s question. Are Simone Schwarz-Bart and her works The Bridge of Beyond and Between Two Worlds (anti-)colonial and/or de-colonial in nature? If I argued that Dario is a colonial subject with a divided consciousness and that Naipaul is a colonial/imperial subject, I maintain that Schwarz-Bart’s works approximate a de-colonial framework. While I cannot contend that she is a fully de-colonial subject (I think I would be hard pressed to name a completely de-colonial subject anywhere), her writings put forth a de-colonial vision of the world, particularly regarding her play with the dichotomies ‘life/death.’

If you are familiar with Schwarz-Bart and her works, there is one notable aspect that is missing in my de-colonial assessment of her works: gender. Critics like Karen
Smyley Wallace have heralded Schwarz-Bart for breaking the patriarchy of the pen. As a woman writer, she breaks a longstanding colonial relationship between masculinity and narrative. Even more, her first novel *The Bridge of Beyond* revolves around a family of matriarchs told from the perspective of the youngest member. Yet, I cannot say that her dealing with gender is completely de-colonial; it might be better described as anti-colonial in some aspects. I say this recognizing my own locus of enunciation: a United Statian/white/heterosexual/middle-class male who is wage-earning participant in the capitalist world-system. I mean if we look at how Ramón Grosfoguel classifies the imperial subject who instituted the coloniality of power—the “European/capitalist/military/christian/patriarchal/white/heterosexual/male”—, my locus of enunciation does not appear too far off from the imperial one (“The Epistemic Decolonial Turn” 216). Thus, it is with humility I approach the topic of gender in relation to Schwarz-Bart’s works. With gender in mind, I would like to continue with the questions gender and sexuality in Schwarz-Bart’s *The Bridge of Beyond* and *Between Two Worlds*. As I stated, our author oscillates between the (anti-)colonial/de-colonial border.

**Coloniality of Gender and the Colonial/Modern Gender System**

When reading Aníbal Quijano’s theoretical works, there is little mention of gender and sex, and when there is, the topic is, for the most part, left undeveloped. His formulation on social classification largely ignores any in-depth discussion of gender
and/or sex. He does, however, claim in his discussion on the body/nonbody dualism that the gendered body is a means for discrimination. He writes: “This new and radical dualism affects not only the racial relations of domination, but the older sexual relations of domination as well. Women especially the women of inferior races (‘women of color’), remained stereotyped together with the rest of the bodies, and their place was all the more inferior for their race…” (Quijano, Coloniality of Power 555-556). He continues by stating that “[i]t is probable (although the question remains to be investigated) that the new idea of gender has been elaborated after the new and radical dualism of the Eurocentric cognitive perspective in the articulation of the coloniality of power” (Quijano, Coloniality of Power 556). Here, we have an admission that he has not fully analyzed gender in relation to coloniality.

Until recently, even those who have continued Quijano’s theoretical trajectory have generally avoided the topics of gender, sex and sexuality. Nevertheless, there are several scholars working within the modernity/coloniality paradigm who are exploring the relationships between gender, sex, sexuality and the coloniality of power/knowledge. One of the most notable scholars in this area is María Lugones. Her work on gender, sexuality and sex has begun to elucidate how coloniality also has shaped gender relations and constituted subjectivities. In her essay “The Coloniality of Gender,” she examines what she calls “the coloniality of gender” and “the colonial/modern gender system.” In addition to using Quijano’s theoretical formulation, she uses works from “Third World and Women of Color feminists” (Lugones 1). Consequently, the fruits of her comparison
result in a better understanding how colonially has constituted gender, sex, sexuality and race.

Lugones charges Quijano with thinking from a heterosexual, patriarchal framework. According to her, “Quijano accepts the global, Eurocentered, capitalist understanding of what gender is about” (Lugones 2). For her, the colonial/modern conception of gender predicates itself on sexual dimorphism, heterosexuality and patriarchy. When Quijano does discuss gender, he does so in colonial/modern conception; he does not delve beyond heterosexual, sexually dimorphic and patriarchal gender relations (Lugones 2). It is at this juncture that Lugones maintains that the theoretical contributions from Women of Color and Third World feminists help reveal that sexual dimorphism, heterosexuality and patriarchy are part of the colonial/modern project. She uses the works of Julie Greenberg, Oyéronké Oyewùmí, Paula Gunn Allen and Michael J. Horswell to demonstrate alternative understandings of gender, sex and sexuality. It is through these scholars’ work that we come to see how the colonial/modern gender system privileges sexual dimorphism, heterosexuality and patriarchy.

One of Lugones’ first tasks is to demonstrate that sex is a social construction rather than a biological one. Her claim takes issue with Quijano’s understanding of sex. As she points out (and as I mentioned in the first chapter), he understands sex as a biological construction rather than a social one. To defend her counterclaim, she uses Greenberg’s “Definitional Dilemmas” to demonstrate how intersexed individuals challenge the sexual binary. Greenberg explains that legal institutions have had the
power to assign a particular sex to an intersexed individual and even force individuals with ‘disparate’ sexual organs to undergo hormonal therapy or surgery to match their assigned sex (Lugones 6). The intersexed subject must either be male or female; in other words, there is no place for intersexed individuals in the colonial/modern gender system. Thus, as I already stated, for Lugones, sex is a social, if not colonial, construction, not a biological one. “The cosmetic and substantive corrections to biology make very clear that ‘gender’ is antecedent to the ‘biological’ traits and gives them meaning. The naturalizing of sexual difference is another product of the modern use of science that Quijano points out in the case of ‘race’” (Lugones 7). Again, we see that Quijano’s work on Eurocentrism vis-à-vis naturalization is a productive formulation. Nonetheless, Lugones reveals how he falls victim to the Eurocentric naturalization of sexual difference.

Keeping Quijano’s naturalization of difference in mind, Lugones argues that the Eurocentric understanding of sexual dimorphism during the colonial/modern period did not apply to both European and non-European populations. For her, “…sexual dimorphism has been an important characteristic of what [she] call[s] ‘the light side’ of the colonial/modern gender system” (Lugones 7). By “light side,” she refers to those within the empire, in other words, Europeans. Thus, it reads that Europeans are sexually dimorphic, either male or female. For non-European populations, she tells us that Europe often did not identify these populations as sexually dimorphic. Rather, Europeans emphasized deviations from the sexual binary so to further relegate non-Europeans. “Sexual fears of colonizers led them to imagine the indigenous people of the Americas as
hermaphrodites or intersexed, with large penises and breasts flowing with milk” (Lugones 7). Put differently, exaggeration, homogenization and stigmatization of alternatives to sexual dimorphism becomes a method to establish and maintain colonial difference. Even today, sexual discrimination and stigmatization still persist under the auspices of coloniality; though, it has been in the past twenty years where this axis of coloniality has been rigorously challenged by queer and gender studies. Nevertheless, before colonization, Lugones reveals (using Greenberg) that sexual dimorphism was not a universal paradigm. Some indigenous populations recognized intersexed individuals and did not try to reassign them to a particular sex (Lugones 7). Such alternative perspectives demonstrate that, like racial difference, sexual difference is a product of naturalization as well. These naturalizations are Eurocentric in formulation and serve the purpose of hierarchizing groups of people.

Like sex, the construction of gender in the colonial/modern project is dimorphic for the “light side,” and, like sex, gender distinction (or its non-distinction) becomes an apparatus of discrimination. Whereas gender within the “light side” of the colonial/modern gender paradigm has been rather rigidly defined—man/woman—, the Eurocentric conception of gender for non-European populations has evolved per coloniality’s needs. Lugones argues that non-European females have occupied various designations during the colonial/modern period. For example, possessing ‘female’ anatomy did not necessarily translate into womanhood. At one point in history, non-European, non-white females were considered animals. “They were understood as animals in the deep sense of “without gender,” sexually marked as female, but without
the characteristics of femininity” (Lugones 13). It is not until later that non-European, non-white females acquire the designation ‘woman.’ Lugones argues that global capitalism reconstitutes non-European females, eventually gendering them as women. This evolution juxtaposes with white females as they have been consistently engendered as women (Lugones 13). Despite the differences constructed between European and non-European women, it is important to emphasize that women from both sides of the colonial/modern equation have been relegated to an inferior plane than men.

Nonetheless, as Lugones mentions a propos Gunn Allen, patriarchy is not universal among all cultures. Gunn Allen explains that Native American populations were often matriarchal (Lugones 7). Furthermore, some societies did not even define gender, as Lugones explains using Oyewúmi’s research. In The Invention of Women, Oyewúmi explains that “‘gender was not an organizing principle in Yoruba society prior to colonization by the West’ (31)” (cited in Lugones 8). Oyewúmi claims that it is not until after colonization that gender and its colonial/modern manifestation of gender inequality in the form of patriarchy appear (Lugones 9). Lugones gives many more examples to demonstrate that it is the colonial/modern project that engenders and privileges sexual dimorphism, patriarchy, heterosexuality and gender, and I am tempted to list all of the alternative examples of gender, sex and sexuality here to reveal coloniality’s stranglehold over these domains. However, to avoid a complete retelling of her article, I limit myself to the few examples above. Having now examined gender, sex and sexuality in relation to the coloniality of power/knowledge, we can proceed to an analysis of Schwarz-Bart’s works and how they engage such topics.
Violence in the Colonial/Modern Gender System:

Colonial Representations of ‘Third World’ Gender Relations

Critics have lauded Schwarz-Bart for her authorship for various reasons. She is largely praised for her voice in a cultural domain that traditionally has lacked feminine voices. This being the case, critics like Indira Karamcheti recognize the importance of Schwarz-Bart’s literary production. In her essay, “The Geographics of Marginality: Place and Textuality in Simone Schwarz-Bart and Anita Desai,” she argues that through the act of writing, Schwarz-Bart has overcome triple marginalization, claiming that Third World women writers have to not only triumph over the obstacles that the Third World and gender present, but also surmount the subject-object duality. “Third World women are colonized equally by geography and gender. As women, they are spatially constrained within their own culture in locally specific ways. In turn, they are usually objects of literary interests rather than voices producing literature: spoken for, rather than speaking subjects” (Karamcheti 127). This triple marginalization has traditionally alienated Caribbean women from the act of writing, as Karamcheti tells us. So, we might say that it is no small feat that Schwarz-Bart has broken the coloniality that has kept women from writing.

In her Francophone Women Writers of Africa and the Caribbean, Renée Larrier echoes Karamcheti’s claims. Larrier centers her work on the concept of authority and female authorship. For her, the act of writing confers the power of inscription and
transmission of knowledge. Accordingly, female authors appropriate such power through their own act of writing (Larrier 2). If we recall the third chapter on Naipaul, Ileana Rodríguez has already established the colonial relationship between writing, power and inscription. Yet, by and large within the colonial project, they were masculine voices that ordered and named the world, constructing knowledge in the process. Consequently, we see the significance of Schwarz-Bart’s authorship in the larger scope of the colonial/modern period. The feminine voice emerges in a traditionally masculine space. Her voice transgresses dominant constellations of power, that is, patriarchy. As Larrier explains, “Francophone African and Caribbean women writers reclaim sites of inscription for women in societies where they often pass unacknowledged as storytellers” (6). The question remains though: does the emergence of feminine voices break through the coloniality of power/knowledge or serve as a new articulation of the same paradigm of power? Does Karamcheti and Larrier’s focus on the female voice unknowingly reiterate coloniality through its affirmation of the gender duality “woman/man” and the power of narrative in ordering and inscribing the world? In this sense, is the emphasis on the feminine and narrative an (anti-)colonial response?

If we take what Lugones argues in her essay, we might claim that Larrier and Karamcheti are relying on the colonial/modern gender system that affirm categorial notions of womanhood and femininity. Nonetheless, we do not have enough information to answer these questions concretely. To do so, we would need Larrier and Karamcheti’s respective definitions of womanhood and femininity. We can, however, highlight the problematic of reaffirming womanhood and femininity, if in other cultures, say Yoruba,
the current concept of gender did not exist. We can, though, begin to explore notions of femininity and womanhood in Schwartz-Bart’s *The Bridge Of Beyond*.

Schwarz-Bart’s novel hinges on the life, thoughts and memories of Telumee Lougandor—the youngest in a family of matriarchs living on the island of Guadeloupe. The book opens with an elderly Telumee in her garden, and for the remainder of the novel, the female protagonist tells the story of her life and her family. She begins with the life of her great grandmother Minerva. From what we learn from our protagonist, Minerva was a former slave who has a daughter outside of wedlock. Toussine is her name, and Minerva and her subsequent partner, Xango, raise her. Toussine grows up and falls in love with Jeremiah, and three daughters are the fruits of their relationship. But, their lives encounter tragedy. Before all three children are born, one of them dies in an unfortunate accident involving lamp oil. This loss sends Toussine into a period of silence and mourning that lasts three years. It is not until the birth of their third child, Victory, that Toussine fully recuperates her strength and high stature in the community. As a result of her rebound from tragedy, the community members baptize Toussine with the name “Queen Without a Name.” She becomes a respected member of the community.

As time passes, so does Jeremiah, and with his death, Toussine leaves her town L’Abandonnée to move to Fond-Zombi so she can live out the rest of her life in solitude. However, her granddaughter will eventually interrupt her isolation.

Toussine’s daughter, Victory, has two daughters with two different men. Of the two, Regina is the eldest, and she eventually goes off to live with her father. The other daughter, Telumee—our protagonist—, remains with her mother until she sends her
offspring to live with Toussine in Fond-Zombi. It is from this point that we, as readers, listen to Telumee tell the story of her life. This *bildungsroman* follows Telumee’s passage from childhood to womanhood and all the joy and trauma that accompanies her along the way. It is in this second part of the novel that we begin to understand what it means to be a woman of color in Guadeloupe and a member of the Lougandor family. She portrays a culture where gender inequality still exists.

For instance, Telumee recounts various instances of gender violence and abuse. One of the most salient examples is the relationship between her and her childhood sweetheart, Elie. In Fond-Zombi, they begin courting each other at a young age. The future for the couple appears rather idyllic—a future where they would celebrate and enjoy each other’s companionship. Telumee describes their initial courtship in this manner: “But Grandmother understood, and said I had inherited her luck, and how rare it was for a star to come out so early in a little Negress’s sky. She looked at Elie through the same eyes as I did, heard him with my ears, loved him with my heart” (Schwartz-Bart, *Bridge* 45-46). Years would pass before their relationship would sour. Though, we might say the red flags were there in the beginning. Telumee recalls that “Elie would always say gravely: ‘Man has strength, woman has cunning, but however cunning she may be her womb is there to betray her. It is her ruin’” (Schwarz-Bart, *Bridge* 45). As he falls on hard economic times, his demeanor changes. He begins to drink heavily, and in his drunken stupors, he begins beating Telumee. She endures these frequent beatings. “Every evening when night fell I would hide my purple skin in the dark and drag myself
to the Queen Without a Name’s” (Schwarz-Bart, Bridge 101). Eventually the physical abuse turns sexual, and Telumee suffers repeated rapes.

One night, Elie comes to the house, Telumee noting something is not quite right about her husband. She asks him if he is okay, to which he responds: “‘Your breasts are full’… ‘your breasts are full and your womb is deep, but you don’t know yet what it is to be a woman – you don’t know it’” (Schwarz-Bart, Bridge 105). She is spared the abuse that night, but this ominous threat will come back to haunt her. He returns several days later.

‘You think you’re still a little girl at the Blue Pool, but if you don’t know it already I tell you you’re a grown-up woman with full breasts under your dress. And soon I’m going to teach you what the word woman means, and you’ll roll on the ground and scream, as a woman does roll and scream when she’s handled right. You’re trying to get away from me, runaway Negress with no forest to go to; you leap into the air and float, but you won’t escape a man like me, and white hairs are not going to scare me.’

(Schwartz-Bart, Bridge 108)

This encounter would be the beginning of repeated sexual assaults. “From then on he never let a day pass without seeing me, without coming to teach me what it means to be a woman” (Schwarz-Bart, Bridge 108). We begin to see a common thread throughout the textual passages here, an emphasis on womanhood. On one hand, womanhood is tied to the womb and breasts, in other words, motherhood. The ability to produce offspring defines the category ‘woman.’ On the other hand, womanhood also means victimization.
Sexual and physical abuse accompanies Elie’s threats. From episodes like these, we are to understand that being a woman in Guadeloupe entails inequality, abuse and motherhood. However, if we leave the analysis at this point, only highlighting that the novel portrays gender inequality and abuse on the island of Guadeloupe—the so-called Third World—, we might perpetuate what Chandra Talpade Mohanty says is symptomatic of Western feminist analysis.

For Talpade Mohanty, she argues that Western feminist discourses often homogenize the ‘Third World’ woman in a categorization that defines her as male dependent, familial subjects and/or a victim of male violence and colonialism. Her analysis of these classifications leads her to claim that Western feminist discourses can “discursive colonize the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the third world, thereby producing/re-presenting a composite, singular ‘third-world woman’…” (Talpade Mohanty 62). What Talpade Mohanty is accusing Western feminists of doing is a colonial practice. Quijano tells us that one of the strategies to institute Eurocentrism was a homogenization of non-European identities. This involved a temporal-spatial distortion that created a homogeneous other, despite the particular cultures and histories. Thus, according to Talpade Mohanty (and we could in good faith say Quijano also), the critic must be cognizant of his or her own positionality when examining gender relations on a macro-scale. Universalizing the condition of the ‘Third World woman’ by using particularities reiterates colonial geopolitical configurations, and ultimately, colonial difference.
In the novel, we can find each representation of woman that Talpade Mohanty warns against. At one point during the abuse, Telumee’s grandmother pleads with her to run away so Elie cannot continue abusing her. She tells her that no woman should endure the abuse and that she has another man in mind with whom Telumee can live. “Already there’s a man who comes to my house to talk to me about you, a good man who adores you once and for all” (Schwarz-Bart, *Bridge* 106). Such a comment reinforces a sense of male dependency, and this isn’t the first vertical representation of gender relations in the novel. Previously, Telumee had stated that the women had “always known in their minds that my destiny was to live on a branch in Fond-Zombi, under Elie’s wing” (Schwarz-Bart, *Bridge* 84). Such descriptions portray a patriarchal society where women are in need of male protection.

Masculine hegemony also manifests itself in the comments and actions of Telumee’s mother, Victory. As I have already stated, Victory has two daughters. However, she has carried three in her womb. During her third pregnancy (a pregnancy she originally did not want), she falls among the rocks while working as a laundress. As a result, she miscarries the child. Telumee recounts: “It was a boy, fully formed, and Mama was always very proud of him. Sometimes she would pause in her ironing, run her fingers lightly over her stomach, and say: ‘People see me in the street, but who can know this belly has carried a man, a man to laugh and cry and become Pope if he felt like it?” (Schwarz-Bart, *Bridge* 18). This example illustrates society’s predilection for male offspring—a belief that patriarchal societies often espouse.
Furthermore, what Telumee says about her mother also highlights another facet of womanhood: womanhood and its intersection with social and religious norms. Telumee explains that “[d]espite her two bastards, my mother was not a fallen woman” (Schwarz-Bart, Bridge 26). Telumee reiterates the belief that childbearing should happen within a monogamous, heterosexual marriage. Thus, the image that our narrator paints in Guadeloupe is a community where Western gender norms and relations define interactions between men and women. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that our narrator’s description of a subsection of Guadeloupe society does not represent the female experience neither around the world nor necessarily the entire community itself. Additionally, delineating clear boundaries between gender and power is difficult in the novel.

_Decolonizing Patriarchy: Matrifocality and Matriarchy in The Bridge of Beyond_

Despite the abuse that Telumee endures, she does not limit her definition of womanhood to motherhood and unequal halves in the gender equation. In an act of defiance, Telumee states that despite the bitterness she held towards Elie and his abuse, “…man’s mishaps have never made the sun shine any less bright, and at the year’s end, the days vied with one another in splendour” (Schwarz-Bart, Bridge 109). We might consider this episode in Telumee’s life a turning point. Elie and his new lover eventually kick her out of the house, and for a second time in her life, she ends up at her grandmother’s house. There, she recuperates from the trauma. Despite the past, she
rejoices at her womanhood. “For the first time I began to think about the life I had lived with Elie without trying to distinguish, without trying to keep the good and throw away the rest. There weren’t two separate parts – they had taken place in one and the same person, and it was well, and I rejoiced at being a woman” (Schwarz-Bart, Bridge 121). She lives with grandmother until her death. After the Queen Without a Name’s passing, Telumee goes to live with her grandmother’s friend, Ma Cia. This arrangement lasts until Ma Cia disappears. Telumee subsequently lives with the man whom her grandmother had once recommended, Amboise. They live together until owners of a sugar plantation kill him during a strike.69

As Telumee’s life nears its end, she takes in a child, Sonore, whom she rears as her own.70 This is the closest she’ll come to having a child of her own, and it is at this moment in her life that the community bequeaths a new name to her, just as they had done with her grandmother—Queen Without a Name. However, this time, Telumee is truly given a name—Telumee Miracle.71 She obtains the name after having helped a man die. This man was Angel Medard, and he comes into Telumee and Sonore’s lives, eventually living with them. Medard takes a liking to Sonore, and the relationship between the two concerns the matriarch. He ultimately flees with the child, but one night he returns to kill Telumee. She had been prepared for this moment, having bought scissors to protect herself. A drunken Medard stumbles towards her, intending to kill her, and she waits with her scissors to defend herself. Though, there is never the need to. Medard, in his drunkenness, falls and hits his head on the corner of the table, mortally wounding himself. Telumee, rather than watch him die alone, helps ease the dying
process. The neighbors note this act of compassion and say, “‘Telumee, dear, Angel Medard lived like a dog and you make him die like a man. Ever since you came to La Folie we have tried in vain to find a suitable name for you. Now you are very old to be given a name, but until the sun has set, anything may happen. So as for us, henceforth we shall call you Telumee Miracle’” (Schwarz-Bart, *Bridge* 166).

Like her grandmother and Ma Cia, Telumee is a respected matriarch in the community. She explains that “the women of La Folie come and ask me to go back there: ‘Mama Miracle, you are the tree our hamlet leans against – do you know what will become of the hill without you?’” (Schwarz-Bart, *Bridge* 168). Telumee’s strength has become part of the landscape. She has become a revered figure in the community. Her social position bucks the colonial relegation that women experience; her high stature is recognized in the community. Telumee is, also, proud of her life.

And then in the evening as the sun goes down, I warm up my supper, I pull up a weed or two, and I think of the Negro’s life and of its mystery. We have no more marks to guide us than the bird in the air or the fish in the water, and in the midst of this uncertainty we live, and some laugh and others sings. I thought I would sleep with one man only and he abused me; I though Amboise immortal; I believed in a little girl who left me; and yet, without quite knowing why, I don’t regard any of all that as a waste of time. It may well be that all suffering, even the prickles in the canefields, are part of the glory of men, and it may well be that looking at it in a
certain way, from a certain angle, I may one day be able to grant a certain beauty even to Angel Medard. (Schwarz-Bart, Bridge 169)

She has no regrets in her life, except one, and it comes late in life. Her first love returns, and he proclaims his love once more. Telumee rejects Elie’s advances, and for her, that is her regret. She cannot forgive him like she forgave Angel Medard. Nonetheless, she finishes her story, with her two feet firmly planted in her garden.

So, the question before us is: how do we understand the interplay between patriarchy and matriarchy in The Bridge of Beyond? I mentioned above that Toussine, Ma Cia and Telumee are matriarchs in the community. In Toussine and Ma Cia’s respective cases, they are widows who never married after their spouses died. However, this is not to say they did not still depend on their counterparts. Both Toussine and Ma Cia live with their dead husbands, Jeremiah and Wa, respectively. This cohabitation is not physical but rather spiritual. Again, as I stated above, shortly after Toussine’s death, Telumee goes to live with Ma Cia. What I left out above is that Ma Cia lives with her dead husband. Telumee explains: “Thus did I leave Fond-Zombi and follow Ma Cia into her forest, to live in the cabin where she lived with the spirit of her dead husband, Wa” (Schwarz-Bart, Bridge 125). Even after his death, the couple maintains their companionship.

In Toussine’s case, shortly before her death, she makes a confession to her granddaughter. She says: “I must make you a confession: for three months Jeremiah has been with me. He hasn’t left me day or night. You see, knowing my time was almost come, he couldn’t wait any longer and came to be near Toussine” (Schwarz-Bart, Bridge
Together, both cases demonstrate a species of interdependency. The couples continue together regardless of the life/death frontier. The verticality that separates the two genders now appears to be horizontal.

Despite the examples of patriarchy and matriarchy in the novel, what Schwarz-Bart’s work demonstrates is a continued interdependency, perhaps complementarity, between men and women, and it is this interdependency that reflects the novel’s decolonial content. Behind the inequality and abuse, we see a community where the men and women *conviven*—coexist—. Although, we must point out that interdependency often falls along traditional gender boundaries, the women completing the domestic chores and maternal duties with the men working outside of the home. For the most part, this *convivencia* surfaces at some moment in each of Telumee’s relationships: with Elie, Amboise and Angel Medard. Even Elie returns in search for his first love, using a phrase he had repeated to her early in their relationship: “Telumee, if I lose my way in the forest, don’t forget that you’re the only woman I shall ever love” (Schwarz-Bart, *Bridge* 171). Her only regret in life is not to be able to *convivir* once again. Perhaps this notion of complementarity is best illustrated by the manner in which Telumee describes her relationship with Amboise—her second love—. “Our waters had mingled and merged, and little warm currents ran through them all day long” (Schwarz-Bart, *Bridge* 152).

Such imagery using water is abundant throughout the novel, and during her life—her voyage *per se*—, she depends on others to weather the storms and basks with them during the moments of sunshine. While her two feet are firmly planted in her garden, it is her relationships with others that determine the flow of her life.
This interdependency and complementarity is not exclusive to the male/female divide. We have already seen that Telumee depends on her grandmother and Ma Cia. What is important to stress, though, is that in all these cases of interdependency, the dependency is not unidirectional. It is bi- (if not, poly-) directional, and this multidirectionality underscores the collective nature within the community. Gerise Herndon highlights this aspect of collectivity as well. She writes: “In representing her Antillean social formation with its matrifocal community, Schwarz-Bart shows group consciousness... Thus individualistic paradigms must be displaced by the collective consciousness of self when reading the texts of marginalized women. Women’s self-definition is based on community in Schwarz-Bart’s text, on matrifocal and matrilineal cultures” (Herndon 161). While I agree with Herndon’s assessment of the novel’s focus on group consciousness and collectivity, I would argue that not only “women’s self-definition is based on the community” but also the men’s. To limit women’s identity to the collective negates the interdependency demonstrated in the novel.73 Herndon goes so far to claim that, in the act of writing, Schwarz-Bart’s “act of self-creation is significant, especially since constructions of the subject and self-consciousness are for women, especially marginalized women, profoundly different from the individualistic model of separate and unique selfhood” (Herndon 161). To exclude marginalized women from the individualistic model is a practice against which Talpade Mohanty warns.

Universalizing particularities can create generalizations that ultimately limit agency and self-expression. While Telumee may represent Afro-Caribbean women in the novel and in Guadeloupe, it is her voice as an individual that tells the story. In fact,
Schwarz-Bart has revealed that the novel is largely based off of a woman storyteller in the community. To continue using the ‘either/or’ paradigm perpetuates coloniality. If we recall Anzaldúa’s claim that the world must move past dichotomies, we see such a practice in *The Bridge of Beyond*. The seemingly contradictory messages of patriarchy and matriarchy coalesce into an interdependency—a *conviviencia*—between individuals in a group overcoming the traumatic past of slavery. What makes this even more significant is that it is a woman’s voice (both Schwarz-Bart’s and Telumee’s) that conveys this message. In this sense, we might say that the (anti-)colonial is de-colonial. In a world where women have been marginalized, it is the opposite’s voice (the female’s) that provides the de-colonial message.

*Engendered Corporalities: Metonymic Expressions of Womanhood*

I want to come back to the question that I posed at the beginning of the chapter. What are the differences between the terms (anti-)colonial and de-colonial? Again, we can use Schwarz-Bart’s first novel to help discern the difference through the manner in which she uses corporality to define womanhood. The *bildungsroman* traces Telumee’s physical development, and it is the emphasis on her breasts that defines her notion of womanhood. Throughout the novel, Telumee’s physical development connotes her entrance into womanhood. The narrator’s emphasis on her own anatomy appears to be a cultural phenomenon given the community’s reaction to her anatomical transformation. When her grandmother sees how puberty is changing her granddaughter’s body, Toussine
announces the changes to the community. “Quick, come and look — Tulemee’s been stung by a wasp!” They all came running, singing, joking, proudly lifting their sagging bosoms, féting in a thousand ways my little budding breasts, and saying teasingly: ‘No matter how heavy your breasts you’ll always be strong enough to support them’” (Schwarz-Bart, *Bridge* 42). Later on, Telumee states: “I was fourteen, with my two breasts, and beneath my flowered calico dress I was a woman” (Schwarz-Bart, *Bridge* 52). And, again, she says: “A breeze caught me up and I didn’t come to until I was on the road, far from the house with colonnades and bourgainvilleas, in free possession of myself and my two breasts” (Schwarz-Bart, *Bridge* 75). And for a final time: “Every morning I woke up drenched in sweat, resolved to leave the forest and live in my own body and woman’s breasts” (Schwarz-Bart, *Bridge* 125). The text clearly establishes the possession of breasts as a signifier for womanhood.

For Herndon, the relationship between breasts and womanhood is an (anti-)colonial one. She claims that “…Télumée’s breasts are, throughout the text, signifiers of pride in her femininity; thus the phallus is displaced from the center, and breasts are no longer merely objects of the male gaze” (Herndon 163). I agree with her assessment regarding the function of Telumee’s breasts. The emphasis on breasts challenges phallocentrism—whether it be in the literary, political, cultural or social domain. If we return to the ‘male/female’ dichotomy, its anatomical equivalent appears something like this: ‘phallus/breasts.’ The phallus and breasts are metonyms for the ‘male/female’ dichotomy. The breasts challenge patriarchy and male-centered world. In other words, the emphasis on breasts is an attempt to debase the masculine center, as Herndon claims;
breasts become a symbol of power rather than the phallus. The colonial paradigm is subsequently inverted, that is, the breasts are an (anti-)colonial response that still relies on the same dualism that constructed colonial difference in the first place. Why is this the case? If we incorporate Lugones argument here, we see that the connection between womanhood and breasts negates intersexed and transgendered individuals. In Schwarz-Bart’s novel, the relationship between anatomy and gender still follows the colonial/modern gender paradigm where particular anatomical parts connote a particular sex and, hence, gender.

*Alternative Unions: Polygamy in Between Two Worlds*

Before we proceed with Schwarz-Bart’s representation of life and death in her novels, I want to explore one more aspect regarding gender relations in her novels. If, in *The Bridge of Beyond*, monogamy or serial monogamy regulates the relationship between men and women, we come across an alternative paradigm in Schwarz-Bart’s second novel, *Between Two Worlds*: polygamy. Unlike *The Bridge of Beyond*, her second novel breaks with the matrifocal narrative and revolves around the life and death of the mythical hero Ti Jean. The result of an incestuous relationship, Ti Jean later becomes a local hero when he saves the island from darkness. While he is growing up on the island, one day a beast swallows up the sun. The island along with the rest of the world plunges into darkness, and as a result, in Guadeloupe, the past reinvents itself. A species of neo-slavery begins as the white landowners begin to enslave the black population on their
plantations. The metaphoric plunge into darkness resurrects a dark period in human history. The sun needed to return. Ti Jean attempts to defeat the beast, but initially he is unable to do so. One day, while he and the pregnant love of his life, Egea, were in the forest, the beast appears and eats her. To try to save the mother of his future child, he climbs in the beast’s mouth, letting it eat him.

Rather than find himself in the beast’s entrails, he lands in pre-colonial Africa among the Ba’Sonanke tribe near the Niger River in West Africa. He settles in, living among the community. There, the king, King Emaniema, warns him that rumors are spreading about bachelor status. Uninterested in the women, he chooses a woman who has Egea’s voice; her name is Onjali. Holding out chance that Onjali is Egea’s African reincarnation, he takes her as his wife. One day, to the surprise of Ti Jean, another hut goes up next to his and Onjali’s. The second hut is for his second wife. Bewildered, Ti Jean asks Onjali if a second wife is acceptable, to which she responds: “‘Yes’… ‘You must be nourished by her as well as by me. It is fitting for a man of your rank’” (Schwarz-Bart, *Between* 162). The family continues to grow as time passes. “As years went by, a third and yet a fourth wife came to add to his perplexity. New huts went up near that of Ti Jean, around which his wives went back and forth, merged now into one great anonymous wheel that never stopped turning…” (Schwarz-Bart, *Between* 162). Despite Ti Jean’s astonishment, polygamy appears to be a normalized practice in the community. Schwarz-Bart’s incorporation of this fact challenges not only Ti Jean’s positionality but also a Western one that normalizes and privileges monogamous
relationships over all others. In this sense, Ti Jean’s astonishment locates our hero within a Western framework; polygamy was something out of the ordinary for him.

In parts of West Africa, polygamy was an acceptable practice before colonialism and coloniality took root in the continent. In *Male daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*, Ifi Amadiume examines understandings of gender and sex in Igbo society in eastern Nigeria. While Schwarz-Bart never definitively locates the Ba’Sonanke tribe (a fictitious tribe), we do learn that the tribe lives near the Niger River in western Africa. Using Igbo martial practices and understanding of gender, these examples will not completely resonate with the novel, but it can give us an idea of alternative martial practices that existed in the region that Schwarz-Bart describes in her work. I want to emphasize that in no way am I trying to universalize Igbo culture to represent (West) African culture. Having stated this, we can move on with Amadiume’s text. In her introduction, she explains that gender is much more flexible than its Western conception. She explains that gender and biological sex are separate. “Daughters could become sons and consequently male. Daughters and women in general could be husbands to wife and consequently males in relation to their wives” (Amadiume 15). While from a Western framework reading Amadiume’s description may be difficult to comprehend, from a position located within Igbo society, there are no contradictions between the roles and genders that men and women can assume.

Our author tells us Igbo language and culture have an important role in understanding the gender flexibility. For instance, Igbo language has a gender-neutral pronoun that makes no gender distinction.
The conceptualization of daughters as males in ritual matters, and politically in relations to wives, is a good example of this gender flexibility and did not imply that daughters should be seen as ‘man-like.’ Another example of the looseness of gender association is the fact that in Igbo grammatical construction of gender, a neuter particle is used in Igbo subject or object pronouns, so that no gender distinction is made in reference to males and females in writing or in speech. There is, therefore, no language or mental adjustment or confusion in references to a woman performing a typical male role. (Amadiume 17)

Keeping gender flexibility in mind, I want to use what Amadiume says about polygamy in Igbo society to supplement Schwarz-Bart’s inclusion of polygamy in Between Two Worlds. The martial practice not only highlights an alternative to the West’s embrace of monogamy, but also underscores different understandings of gender.

In her seventh chapter “Colonialism and the Erosion of Women’s Power,” Amadiume recounts the story of a wealthy and powerful woman in Nnobi (located today in Nigeria) in the 19th century. Amadiume uses the fictitious name Okenwanyi to protect her and her family’s identity. Okenwanyi is married, and her husband also has another wife. Okenwanyi’s husband’s first son is the offspring of the other wife. This means that, in terms of inheritance and hierarchy, this son is first in line. Okenwanyi herself has two children with her husband. Her husband eventually dies, and as a result, the first-born son inherits his father’s wives. Consequently, Okenwanyi (who you could consider the son’s step-mother) becomes his wife. The first-born son not only inherits
Okenwanyi, but also her wives. “Okenwanyi herself had nine wives,” as Amadium explains (124). Wealthy Igbo women often had wives of their own. In Okenwanyi’s case, when her husband died, she sold off most of her wives to men and collected their dowries. In Amadium’s example, Okenwanyi is considered a “female husband.” The term “female husband,” or igba ohu, is the title given to a wealthy woman who has wives of her own. The female husband could marry her wife off to a man or could have her wife bear children in the female husband’s name (Amadium 42). Amadium tells us that the Christian church eventually condemned female husbandry, misunderstanding the purpose of woman-to-woman marriage (123). Within in the novel there are hints that, among Ti Jean’s wives, there is also a hierarchical structure; nonetheless, given the diversity of the African indigenous populations near the Niger River, it would be problematic to attempt to compare polygamy in Between Two Worlds and Igo society. The point I want to make is simply that both Schwarz-Bart and Amadium’s respective works incorporate alternative gender and marital structure that ultimately challenge a Eurocentric positionality.

**Between Life and Death:**

*Zombification and the (De)coloniality of Religion in The Bridge of Beyond*

In the first and a half-decade of the 21st century, zombies have captivated popular imagination in the United States. Today, in North America, there are television programs, movies and comics that revolve around or include zombies. Nonetheless, I
was still surprised to find zombie references as I was reading *Between Two Worlds*: the town where Telumee and her grandmother live, Fond-Zombi; men walking around like zombies; Telumee herself like a zombie at one point her life. I had zombies coming from all sides. However, as I prepared my argument, I skipped over the zombies, thinking that there was no relation to zombies and (de)coloniality and, not to mention, to include a currently popular topic in the United States also carries with it the danger of coloniality’s perpetuation through cultural hegemony. Nevertheless, one day, as I was reading criticism on her novel—Maria T. Smith’s to be precise—, I came across the term “zombification.” Smith had used it in her analysis of the presence of Vodun in Schwarz-Bart’s novel. After a conversation with a colleague, I decided to give the zombie and (de)coloniality more thought, and, ultimately, as evidenced here, I am writing about the ‘living-dead.’ The image of the zombie serves several purposes in this section, one of them being colonial and another, de-colonial.

In her *Consuming the Caribbean*, Mimi Sheller explains that the figure of the zombie started to become popular in the United States during the first half of the 20th century. Using travel narratives describing the Caribbean, the film industry began producing films that centered their stories on zombies. “Hollywood zombie movies brought the ethnological sensationalism of travel in Haiti to the big screen, and the zombie entered North American and European culture as a creature more terrifying than even the cannibal had been” (Sheller 146). For Sheller, the consequences of these films reinforced already negative stereotypes of Haitians and other Caribbean populations; the racialized other became dangerous in Western viewers’ eyes (146). Through the image
of the zombie, Western cinematographic production perpetuated disparaging, primitive and dangerous (in both senses) representations of the non-European, non-white other.

While, for the West, the figure of the zombie is a tool to construct colonial difference, within displaced African communities in the Caribbean, the figure represents coloniality and its consequences. For Sarah Juliet Lauro, the zombie is a product of colonialism. In her dissertation *The Modern Zombie: Death in the Technological Age*, Lauro explains that the figure predominantly comes into being during Africans’ forced displacement (31). The enslavement of African populations transformed lives in many ways. They experienced social, political, cultural and ontological loss, separation and displacement, and it was the figure of the zombie that captured these consequences. For Joan Dayan in her *Haiti, History and the Gods*, the zombie represented, and still represents, this loss and dispossession. “The phantasm of the zombi—a soulless husk deprived of freedom—is the ultimate sign of loss and dispossession” (Dayan 37). Even after slavery’s end, the possibility of loss, separation and displacement continued as the race/labor articulation maintained its validity in the colonial/modern world-system.

Take, for example, *The Bridge of Beyond*. The specter of slavery troubles Telumee’s first beau, Elie. He swears to himself that he will never work in the sugar cane fields. “Elie railed and swore by all the gods the cane would never get him, he was never going to buy a knife to go work on the land of the white men” (Schwarz-Bart, *Bridge* 54). What we might gleam from Elie’s belief is the profound impact slavery still holds on the island. The legacy of slavery as a colonial form of labor still haunts the social and economic relations. Yet, slavery (and its past) determines and affects many
more axes that just the social and economic domains. As Sheller puts it: “Slavery, however, is not only an economic relation; it is also a cultural, symbolic, spiritual, bodily and affective relation, thus its legacies are manifold” (4). In the novel, work on the sugar cane plantation still follows a racial division of labor; its economic and social relations still are colonial. Yet, in Telumee’s recount of Elie’s sentiments, the spiritual, corporal and affective relations of slavery reveal themselves as well. Elie tells Telumee that he rather cut off his hands than go to work in the fields, to which another man present during the conversation responds: “‘Here’s what a Negro should do rather than go among the spikes of the canefields: cut off his right hand and make a present of it to the whites’” (Schwarz-Bart, Bridge 54). Here, the relationship between spiritual and bodily relations become apparent within (‘post’-)slavery. The amputation keeps the (ex)slave from being reduced to the ‘living-dead’—a subject-turned-object, or disposable life—. Elie does not want to participate in a system that engendered ‘living dead.’ He rather lose his hand rather than his spirit; put simply, he does not want to become a zombie.

The figure of the zombie also has religious ties. In Haiti during the time of its revolution, Voodoo priests, houngans, were said to be able to use a secret potion of ingredients to transform humans into corpse-like beings (Lauro 48). As Lauro explains, Voodoo became a tool of resistance during the revolution. Houngans would use toxins and herbs to kill their masters, feign death and relieve pain (Lauro 9). The secrecy that surrounded these herbal and toxic remedies and the sociopolitical uprising led to the propagation of the zombie myth. On one hand, the zombie comes to represent the injurious state the slave lived in—as disposable life or the ‘living dead’—, and, on the
other, the zombie conjures up the mysterious Voodoo practices used to ultimately emancipate the slaves in Haiti’s case (Lauro 57-62). Thus, as Lauro claims, the zombie represents both colonial and political resistance. “The zombie, as both a product of Vaudou and of a knowledge of herbal plants that still defies Western understanding, deserves to be read in terms of Vaudou’s association with political resistance, and the legacy of the herbal knowledge that was employed in slave rebellions” (Lauro 62). In other words, the zombie challenges coloniality; it escapes Eurocentric ordering and systematization of knowledge, and it becomes a tool to overcome slavery—a economic system that relied on social classification to extract forced, unpaid labor.

Although the zombie is the offspring of coloniality, that is not to say that the figure fully abides by its parent’s logic. The zombie, appropriated by both the colonizer and the colonized, is a hybrid being. Lauro underscores this hybridity with the term ‘living-dead’ (33). The zombie occupies this liminal space, as does its history. “The zombie as we know it is the product of a predominantly oral, story-telling culture, which developed over the course of more than two centuries, and which may have been influenced by dozens of African myths, as well as European and Carib legends…” (Lauro 45). As a hybrid figure with clearly intertwined, rhizomatic origins told through a mixture of orality and writing, the ‘living-dead’ contaminates Eurocentric dualities used to create coloniality difference. In this sense, the very figure that coloniality engendered is its undoing. Hence, despite the West’s current fascination with zombies, I find the figure to be a productive one.
I use the figure of the zombie because it helps highlight four articulations of (de)coloniality: life, death, religion and labor. I already discussed the concept of disposable life in the previous chapter; however, I would like to continue with the concept of life and problematize it with its counterpart, death. To begin, we must look at how coloniality engages life/death. There are two articulations that I would like to highlight: (1) a divine understanding of life and death and (2) a rational understanding of the two. In both cases, coloniality lurks in both domains. Take, for example, dominant conceptions of the divine in the world. Within the colonial matrix of power, the privileged religion is Christianity—a religion that hinges upon the belief in a triune deity that decides whether or not believers and non-believers are condemned to spiritual negation after their material death.

For Ramón Grosfoguel, Christianity tops the spiritual hierarchy; the colonial/modern system includes “a spiritual hierarchy that privileged Christians over non–Christian/ non–Western spiritualities institutionalized in the globalization of the Christian (Catholic and later Protestant) Church” (“Transmodernity” 6). This hierarchization not only meant Christianity’s supposed superiority but also its validity. As a consequence, non-Christian religions were relegated and their beliefs, negated. We might call this religious constellation of power: coloniality of religion. Within this axis of coloniality, alternative spiritual systems were even demonized, like Voodoo and its variants in the Caribbean. Thus, the question becomes, how do we understand Schwarz-Bart’s novels given their inclusion of Voodoo(-like) beliefs and characteristics? Is her inclusion an anti-colonial or de-colonial act? I argue that Schwarz-Bart’s novels debase
Christianity’s institutionalization given that the religious modus operandi is not Christianity but rather a Caribbean syncretic religion that draws from African religious beliefs and practices. It is the interplay between life, death, alienation and conviviality in *The Bridge of Beyond* that reveal its de-colonial character.

In her *African Religious Influences on Three Black Woman Novelists: The Aesthetics of “Vodun,”* Maria T. Smith argues that both of Schwarz-Bart’s novels recuperate and call attention to African cultural beliefs in the Caribbean. For Smith, Schwarz-Bart’s inclusion of Vodun or Vodun-like practices in her novels acts as a form of spiritual liberation and a positive identity marker for marginalized Caribbean peoples (1). She notes that there are many variations of African religions in the Caribbean, and in her study, she applies the Haitian variant, Vodun, to Schwarz-Bart’s work.

Smith explains that some of the most important tenets of Vodun are the ritualistic practices that stimulate communication between the visible and invisible worlds. “Contrary to popular belief, the essence of Vodun lies not in the performance of malevolent acts of sorcery, but rather in ritualistic practices designed to provide communication with loas (spirits) on earth, who act as intermediaries between the visible world and the invisible, where a single all-powerful God resides” (Smith 1). She explains further that Vodun is a holistic religion that emphasizes the interconnectedness between loas (spirits), humans and nature, the visible and invisible, the secular and the religious and good and evil. Vodun can be used for benevolent and malevolent purposes. However, it is the malevolent practices that have stereotyped Vodun in Eurocentric narratives. “The esoteric nature of Vodun, and its ‘heathen’ African origin, together
provide a partial explanation for its insalubrious image in the West; but negative associations with Vodun also arise from misconceptions about its metaphysics” (Smith 1). She states that many authors of African heritage have minimized the influence of African religion in their lives due to the stigma associated with the religion. Thus, for Smith, Vodun’s incorporation in literary texts is, in essence, a political act. “I argue that the writers in this study offer ways of resisting the ‘othering’ and ‘silencing’ installed in the dominant discourses through the use of language as a subversive tool derived from an Vodun aesthetic” (Smith 11). Put differently, alternative spiritual understandings of the world—including life and death—challenge the coloniality of religion and the coloniality of knowledge/rationality.

Smith argues that, in The Bridge of Beyond, Vodun is present through the articulations between life-affirming and -negating forces and the interrelationships between humans and nature. For her, the name of the village where Toussine and Telumee live—Fond-Zombi— is no coincidence. She argues that the name supports the zombification that occurs in the community. By zombification, she refers to the psychic alienation of the marginalized, exploited individuals on the island (Smith 65). The trauma of slavery has affected the society to the extent that alienation and ontological negation has led to the inhabitants’ precariousness. One of these inhabitants who demonstrates this precariousness is Elie. According to Smith, “Elie’s fear that he will turn into the incarnation of evil becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy for he eventually loses his soul to the colonial and capitalist machinery” (60). For her, his incarnation of evil embodies the dark forces within Vodun, and she appears to argue that the trigger for this
evil is the disruption between the interconnectedness that permeates Vodun. We can take
the colonial and capitalist machinery (slavery) to be this disruption; the evils of slavery—
the dehumanization and devaluation of human life—destabilizes the victims. Referring
to Elie’s downfall, she writes, “His spiritual and psychological demise culminates in
perpetual vagabondage, thereby earning him the title “Poursuivi definitif” (“Hunted
One”) from the villagers” (Smith 61). Elie is a zombie held within a precarious position
between life and death; he is the ‘living-dead.’

Smith makes the argument that Elie and many male characters in the novel exhibit
the zombie-like states as a result of loss, exploitation and trauma; yet, it is description of
Telumee that best exemplifies the suspension between life and death. After Elie begins
beating her, she changes; the trauma is too much for her. She starts wandering around
Fond-Zombi, scaring the community members. Telumee recounts her mental and
physical state:

Passers-by looked on me as a kind of apparition. They took the
precautions one takes with a spirit enclosed in flesh; as they approached
my cabin their conversations would fade to a cautious murmur. Both
children and grown-ups seemed to dread frightening me, lest I should fly
away. A few stray dogs did bark at me, but even their yapping only
confirmed the general idea that I had been changed into a zombie.
(Schwarz-Bart, Bridge 103)

Here, life and death is not presented in dualistic terms; it is a continuum. The phrase “a
spirit enclosed in flesh” best denotes this relationship. The physical abuse and trauma—
the dark forces—interrupt her communication and communion with the world and herself; as a zombie, she becomes a shadow of her self. Fortunately, for Telumee, she is able to overcome her shadow.

For Smith, she alludes to a gender distinction between the susceptibility to the dark forces in Vodun. She notes that various male characters in the novel succumb to these forces whereas the female characters represent the religion’s positive, light forces. “In this novel, critics have noted the strong symbolism of the woman (mother) and the island (earth) in their beauty, their fertility and their duration as opposed to the male, who is depicted as uncertain, a passing stranger” (Smith 61). While I mostly agree with Smith’s assessment, there are instances (like Telumee’s zombification) where women in the novel represent uncertainty as well. Nonetheless, she argues that the female characters maintain better communication with the natural world, and as a result, there is a greater sense of convivencia with others and nature—an argument I agree with. “Schwarz-Bart shows that the source of the Lougandor women’s strength is the fundamentally Vodun philosophy by which they live, a strong sense of connection with the natural world around them and particularly other beings” (Smith 61).

One of the most apparent connections between women and nature are the abundant references to tree imagery. Smith maintains that the allusion between the two not only underscore this connection but also incorporate Vodun beliefs. She writes: “The tree… is an important symbol in Vodun. Inhabited by spirits, it constitutes the axis between the visible and invisible worlds, represented symbolically by the Poteau-mitan, the center pole of the Vodun tent” (Smith 63). Citing Karen Smyley Wallace’s “The
Female and the Self in Schwarz-Bart’s *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle,*” Smith affirms Wallace’s argument that the female characters are all associated with nature in some aspect. “Karen Smyley Wallace observes that Minerve is associated with light; Toussine, with the notion of roots from the earth; Victoire, with the mind (in privileging her personal happiness); and Télumée with the earth, fecundity, dawn, bark and tree, or even the island itself (as she contemplates its physical nature)” (Smith 62). Besides these images, water also plays an important role in describing the relationship between the earth and the characters.

Above I cited Telumee’s description of Amboise’s and her relationship where their waters mingled. The metaphors of interconnectedness and fluidity abound in the novel. “All rivers, even the most dazzling, those that catch the sun in their streams, all rivers go down to and are drowned in the sea. And life awaits man as the sea awaits the river. You can make meander after meander, twist, turn, seep into the earth – your meanders are your own affair. But life is there, patient, without beginning or end, waiting for you like the ocean” (Schwarz-Bart, *Bridge* 52). Like the ocean, life for our narrator ebbs and flows through its dark and light moments, but she reminds herself that she “must be like pebble in a river just resting on the bottom” (Schwarz-Bart, *Bridge* 60). Our narrator flows through life all the while sharing moments with others in her community; she communes with nature and her community despite the moments of alienation and isolation, that is, zombification. For Smith,

This novel celebrates life in all of its manifestations: human, animal, and vegetal; visible and invisible. Nevertheless, in repeatedly affirming the
value and dignity of human life, as well as her womanhood, the protagonist bears witness to the Vodun belief in the sanctity of the human body and in particular the female body as the source of life; it is the antithesis of zombification which is characterized by, among other things, a loss of awareness of the value of one’s body. (Smith 66)

In dialogue with the previous sections on gender and femininity, Smith’s passage helps reveal the complementary and interconnected structure within the novel. Femininity comes to embody this interconnectedness and communion between the invisible and visible, between humans and nature and between the self and other. Ultimately, through conviviality, the novel challenges the boundaries between these domains. The invisible becomes visible; the natural becomes human; the self becomes the other. Schwarz-Bart’s inclusion of Vodun or Vodun-like beliefs not only challenges the coloniality of religion and the loss and alienation that the zombie incurs, but it also helps us re-conceptualize the boundaries between life, death, humans and nature that safeguard against the exploitation and negation of life.

*Between Life and Death: Material and Spiritual Worlds in Between Two Worlds*

I had started my research with *The Bridge of Beyond*, and, for me, I found the novel a pleasant read. However, when I first started reading *Between Two Worlds*, I had a difficult time connecting with the text; the reading process became laborious for me. It was not that the book was poorly written; I just never have been one for books where
‘irrationality’ drives the content. What do I mean by that? I find it hard to relate to texts where the protagonists climb in the mouths of beasts and, rather than end up in the animal’s stomach, they end up in another continent. As I read Schwarz-Bart’s second novel, I had a difficult time moving past the plot’s ‘irrationality.’ As I was reading, I kept drawing parallels with Alejo Carpentier’s *The Kingdom of This World*. In his text, a person could metamorphose into an animal or rise up from a burning fire and have it all be part of daily life. I subsequently classified her work in the same genre: the marvelous real. Then, about halfway through Schwarz-Bart’s second novel, I realized where my problem with the marvelous real (or magical realism and fantasy) lay. To me, these types of works were not ‘rational.’ From my positionality, I could not reason the events taking place; a human with lycanthropic capabilities was not rational for me. It was at this moment that I caught myself thinking from within coloniality. My aversion for fantasy was rooted in what I perceived was its ‘irrationality.’

Quijano might say I demonstrate a “colonization of the imagination” (“Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality” 169). He argues that colonization not only colonized territories but also people and their minds. One of colonization’s instruments was the repression of different and alternative modes of knowing. According to him, once the suppression of different modes of knowing and indigenous production of knowledge occurred, colonizers then imposed their own knowledge (“Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality” 169). As we learned in the first chapter, one of the fundamental paradigms that shaped European knowledge production was Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum*. Quijano reminds us that Descartes’ dictum placed knowledge production on the subject’s
capability to reason rather than the divine (“Coloniality of Power” 555). There are many implications of this paradigm shift, but what concerns us here is the focus from the divine, in other words, the supernatural, to the subject’s ability to comprehend the world around him. Descartes’ rationality becomes the privileged, normalized paradigm, and my distaste for fantasy likely originates from the Cartesian divide. All the same, how does this all fit into my argument that Schwarz-Bart’s texts are, for the most part, de-colonial?

Both her novels include and register alternative understandings of the world, and these modes of understanding break with the European sense of rationality. The most apparent rupture might be the manner in which the novels deal with life and death. Again, it is not a simple “either/or,” as we have seen with the concept of the zombie in The Bridge of Beyond. The dualism ‘life/death’ itself has been a concept that I have found problematic. Today, many scholars use Michel Foucault and Achille Mbembe’s respective concepts, biopolitics and necropolitics. For example, in the 1970’s Foucault coins the term ‘biopolitics’ to articulate the manner in which the political uses the biological to exert power over others.

He argues that state rulers used death as a means to discipline their subjects during the 17th century and the first half of the 18th. The relationship was one of ‘make die’ or ‘let live’ and existed on an individual level: human/body. However, the second half of the 18th century rearticulated the manner in which governance operated. Modern states regulated and disciplined subjects through a relationship of ‘make live’ or ‘let die,’ this time on the collective level: human/species. Emphasis was placed on maintaining life rather than forcing death as the means of population regulation and discipline (Foucault
What I want to emphasize is that Foucault’s formulation maintains neat boundaries around life and death, either ‘make die/let live’ or ‘make live/let die.’ Thus, we can say that Foucault’s formulation is a materialist, rationalist understanding of death that predicates itself on biological, scientific discourse.

From this framework, the divide between life and death is fairly clear. In the biological, scientific sense, death is often acknowledged as the moment that both the brain and heart cease to function. Once oxygen-starved cells reach a point of irreparable damage and the impossibility of resuscitation occurs, clinical death of the subject takes place.78 Using a similar framework, Mbembe also analyzes the relationship between life, death and politics. However, his term ‘necropolitics’ allows for more possibilities than Foucault’s neat dualities. For Mbembe, necropolitics refers to the power that death has in the configurations between life, sacrifice, terror and resistance. It is death that subjugates life; it becomes the modus operandi of political relations. I would argue that Mbembe’s formulation opens up to alternative understandings of life and death and begins to take into account the question of coloniality.

Using Giorgio Agamben’s work on the state of exception, Mbembe addresses the relationship between death and terror within coloniality/modernity. For him, the plantation is site of this state of exception.79 On the plantation the slave is a shadow (Mjembe 21). The slave’s condition “results from a triple loss: loss of a ‘home,’ loss of rights over his or her body, and loss of political status. This triple loss is identical with absolute domination, natal alienation, and social death (expulsion from humanity altogether)” (Mjembe 21). It sounds like Mbembe is describing the zombie, doesn’t it?
Politically, the slave is reduced to something between life and death. S/he is alienated; there is no community on the plantation, according to Mbembe. Reciprocity and community cannot exist when the slave is reduced to a shadow given that the slave loses the right to think and speak (Mbembe 21). In other words, the slave loses the right to be a rational subject. The slave’s triple loss also includes a loss of his or her subjectivity; s/he becomes an object. Mbembe explains that slaves are instruments of labor, and their value lies in their distinction as property (21). “His or her labor is needed and used. The slave is therefore kept alive but in a state of injury, in a phantom-like world of horrors and intense cruelty and profanity” (Mbembe 21). Thus, he concludes that “[s]lave life, in many ways, is a form of death-in-life” (21). Put differently, slavery is the zombification of life. Foucault’s formulation of ‘make die/let live’ and ‘make live/let die’ does not account for coloniality. If he had considered it, the neat dualisms would look like something like this: life/death/race/labor/origin/corporality/subjectivity/etc. In this way, Mbembe’s work on necropolitics catches Foucault thinking from the center.

Even though the slave lives on the plantation in a state of exception governed by terror, Mbembe tells us that the slave still safeguards alternative understandings of the world, self and time. In other words, the slave is not necessarily the ‘living dead’; psychologically and spiritually, s/he can be alive. “Treated as if he or she no longer existed except as a mere tool and instrument of production, the slave nevertheless is able to draw almost any object, instrument, language or gesture into a performance and stylize it” (Mbembe 22). In this section, I want to demonstrate how Between Two Worlds addresses life and death from spiritual and material domains from the (ex)plantation.
As I briefly narrated previously in this chapter, Ti Jean becomes the hero of Guadeloupe and the world. He is the one who made the sun reappear and free his community from the bondages of slavery once again. However, even before the black population is enslaved once more, slavery’s past is still present on the island; it continues to affect Guadeloupeans psychologically and spiritually. The island itself does not feel like home for its black community; nothing attaches them to the land. The narrator explains: “…the blacks of Fond-Zombi thought there was not a single event about the island worth remembering. Sometimes, deep down, some of them wondered whether after all there might not be some glory in their past, some radiance which might reflect on them a little; but fearing, ridicule, they were careful to keep their thoughts to themselves” (Schwarz-Bart, *Between 4*). Already, at the novel’s onset, the reader senses the community’s displacement. The novel takes place during the early 20th century. Nevertheless, the island’s social and economic situation remains in the past; not much has changed. “Everyday life was hardly any different form what the oldest among them had known in the days of slavery” (Schwarz-Bart, *Between 7*). The negation and inferiorization that coloniality imparted on the black population still lurks on the island; they continue to have a double consciousness.

A conversation between two community members best illustrates the legacy of slavery vis-à-vis double consciousness. One day, as Ti Jean and Egea are returning to home with Egea’s brother, Anancy, they stop by one of the local bars. There, a small group is conversing about the state of the Guadeloupean black population. The novel’s narrator tells us that the conversation follows a typical discourse within the black
community. The narrative goes something along the lines of: “Someone said God
doesn’t love us because we’re only his bastards and the white men are his real children.
Someone else said life is a wheel, and that if it had turned differently the white men
would have been where we are, our slaves perhaps” (Schwarz-Bart, *Between 40-41*). The
community is used to hearing commentaries like this. Nonetheless, it is what one of the
bar’s patrons says, Fat Edward, that unsettles the others there, and in particular, another
patron, Filao. While the passage is long, I reproduce it here in its entirety to convey its
weight.

Then, picking up a glass of rum to loosen a tongue still stiff from a day in
the sun, Fat Edward, the devil, laughed quietly and continued:

“So you suffer, do you, you useless lot? Well, go on suffering my
little wingless angels, and just let me tell you your suffering will get
nowhere, and no one in the world, no one, has the least idea it exists.”

At that point old Filao bent his thin body toward him and said in a
low voice, as if afraid to raise his Ancient’s voice:

“Hey, Fat Edward, smasher of other people’s delight, won’t you
ever have a pleasant word to say to people? We know we’re outcasts, but
does that mean we haven’t got souls, as you seem to think? Won’t you
even let us have a soul, my friend?”

“You feel you’ve got a soul, do you?” cried the other.

“I may well have, I may well have,” said old Filao doubtfully.

“Don’t you feel you have one?”
“Me? A soul? No, it’s only men who have souls, old Filao. And I may look like a man, but I’m not one.”

“What you do feel you are, then?” asked the old man.

“Sometimes a donkey and sometimes a horse. Now one and now the other,” answered the drunkard with a sarcastic pretense of regret which succeeded in finishing off his audience. (Schwarz-Bart, *Between* 41)

Fat Edward’s self-negation unsettles the group; he reduces himself to both bare and disposable life. He is not human; he is the living-dead. We cannot use the term ‘double consciousness’ to describe his situation because he has internalized the Eurocentric, colonial discourses that originally dehumanized the non-European. He only sees himself through the Eurocentric perspective; he reduces himself to animality, to a state of exception, to an instrument of labor.

The others at the bar, they see themselves differently; despite the centuries of dehumanization on the plantation, they are not soulless. Unlike Fat Edward, whom we might say is psychologically and spiritually dead, the others reject such notion; though, Filao does acknowledge the injurious state of the black community. At one point he says to Fat Edward:

Fat Edward, my friend, you breathe an air in the forest that doesn’t agree with you. We are what we are, and the disaster is complete, naked, without any trappings. But it’s because we’ve been beaten and beaten—again don’t you ever think of that? Yes, we were men once, whole men, like everyone on earth. And we built their sugar factories, we worked in
their fields and built their houses, and they beat us and belabored us until we didn’t know anymore whether we belonged to the world of men or to the world of the winds, the void, and nothingness. (Schwarz-Bart, *Between*)

Filao’s statement sounds a bit like Mbembe’s description of the slave on the plantation, doesn’t it? The slaves and their descendants are between two worlds; they teeter between life and death and between the world of men and the world of nothingness; they are the ‘living-dead.’ With such a positionality, colonality continues to constitute black subjectivities in Guadeloupe. The terror, trauma, displacement and alienation that African populations experienced upon enslavement continue to affect their descendants psychologically and spiritually.

Both colonialism and colonality re-shaped local geographies and reconstituted subjectivities. As I said above, the novel portrays the precariousness of the black population; the island is not quite their home despite their centuries long presence there. “The shape and arrangement of the houses went back to the same period, as did their poor and wretched appearance: mere boxes perched on four stones, as if to signify how precariously the black man was rooted in the soil of Guadeloupe” (Schwarz-Bart, *Between* 7). The metaphor of the house describes the (ex)slave’s position; unlike their colonial counterparts, the (ex)slave has not marked the land their own. We must remember that the notion of rootedness is a colonial term. Europeans inscribed the land and people, rooting themselves around the world. Nonetheless, from Schwarz-Bart’s novel, we infer a relationship between subjectivity and the ability to name and inscribe.
In the absence of this relationship, the community in Fond-Zombi does not quite feel that they can call Guadeloupe their home. As Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi explains in his “The Poetics of Exile and Errancy in *Le Baobab fou* by Ken Bugul and *Ti Jean L’Horizon* by Simone Schwarz-Bart,” many characters in French Caribbean novels are searching for a place to call home. “Whether alienated from their indigenous cultures or exiled from the hegemonic other’s territory, they are in search of roots and ground, of new cultural and ethnic spaces in which to construct new identities for themselves” (196). Hence, we might say rootedness is another term for territorialization, and both terms are relevant when discussing colonialism, coloniality and the nation (the last being a colonial construct).

In many cases, indigenous populations had to confront imposed Eurocentric paradigms and find means to resist these new, oppressive constellations whereas in other cases, some indigenous populations were simply uprooted and moved within the colonial empire. In the example of the former, we can use Partha Chatterjee’s *The Nation and its Fragments* to understand how colonized people used the system of the colonizer to resist psychological and spiritual colonization. In his book, he takes up the Benedict Anderson’s notion of imagined community and counters Anderson’s idea with the question, ‘whose imagined community?’ Chatterjee’s claim is that Anderson’s concept of the nation is Eurocentric, and we have already seen through Grosfoguel how the nation itself is a Eurocentric construction.

In the case of colonial India, Chatterjee explains that two spheres existed: the material and spiritual. For him, “[t]he material is the domain of the ‘outside,’ of the
economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed... The spiritual on the other hand, is an ‘inner’ domain bearing the ‘essential’ marks of cultural identity” (Chatterjee 6). If I am reading Chatterjee correctly, he appears to connote the outside—the material—with Eurocentric modernity, at least in the case of India. This version of modernity includes (as Quijano and others have argued) a Westernizing process that has privileged rationality, its manifestations (e.g. science, history, etc.) and the political concept of the nation over other paradigms of thought and political organization. Within colonization, the West was able to survey, register and inscribe the ‘material,’ making it their own. Thus, by ‘material,’ in addition to understanding it as the outside domain, we might define it as the objects, geographies, bodies and paradigms that the West can register and re-inscribe to meet the needs of the imperial project. In this sense, the West inscribes the slave’s body in its materiality as an object and instrument of labor. Yet, to continue with the example of the slave, while the body may be colonized and re-inscribed by force, the mind can be much more difficult. Corporal or material colonization does not necessarily mean mental or spiritual colonization as well. Mbembe’s argument that slaves often appropriated objects, language and customs and then stylized them to make them their own dovetails well with Chatterjee’s. Put differently, while the body—the outside domain—does not evade colonization, the mind—the inner realm—may do so.

Let’s take one example from Chatterjee before returning to Between Two Worlds. To exemplify the relationship between the two domains, he discusses the role of language in India. He explains how English becomes the dominant language during the beginning
of the 19th century, marginalizing the native language of the Bengali elite, Persian. One way of normalizing English is through its requirement during official state business. However, towards the middle of the same century, the Bengali elite begins to reject the linguistic imperialism (Chatterjee 7). They start using the presses, newspapers and other resources as sources of agency to change the preferred language back to the original. In other words, they use the Western imposed material domain as a means of subversion.

Chatterjee sees this as an example of the workings of the inner and outer domains. “The bilingual intelligentsia came to think of its own language as belonging to that inner domain of cultural identity, from which the colonial intruder had to be kept out; language therefore became a zone over which the nation first had to declare its sovereignty and then had to transform in order to make it adequate for the modern world” (Chatterjee 7). In this case, the material domain during the colonial period serves a dual purpose for both the colonizer and colonized. As a tool of colonization, this outer domain subjugates the colonized, obliging them to follow the colonizer’s demands. As a tool of resistance, the colonized appropriate the framework to externalize the spiritual domain. In the words of Mbembe, the colonized stylize the colonizer’s system. In this sense, for Chatterjee, imitation is not necessarily detrimental for colonized populations and individuals, for the spiritual will emerge in the ‘outer’ domain. Nonetheless, Chatterjee is not arguing that imitation is the solution; he notes the inherent dangers of mimesis. He sustains that if imitation becomes the form of resistance, one must protect the ‘essential’ qualities of the indigenous culture. “The greater one’s success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one’s spiritual
culture. This formula is, I think, a fundamental feature of anticolonial nationalisms in Asia and Africa” (Chatterjee 6). We have to wonder here what Chatterjee means by “anticolonial.” Does the distinction of “one’s spiritual culture” predicate itself on the opposition to West in the dualistic sense or do we begin to see a departure from it (a question that is worth addressing but might needlessly distract us from the task at hand)?

If we continue to use Chatterjee’s dualistic formulations of ‘inner/outer’ and ‘material/spiritual’ and read it in the context of Schwarz-Bart’s novel, we come to understand the importance of Ti Jean’s quest and the blurring of the boundaries between these domains. As I demonstrated above, as readers, we still see the consequences of slavery on the island. The displacement, alienation and dehumanization have psychologically and spiritually affected the (ex)slave community; a colonial narrative still constitutes the land and the people. Besides the debate we saw between Fat Edward and Filao at the bar, there are other references about the spiritually precarious state of community. Take, for example, how two women bid each other farewell. “And when two village women parted after one of those little chats when time is forgotten, instead of bidding each other ‘au revoir’ they would shorten it to ‘au rêve’—meaning ‘til the dream’” (Schwarz-Bart, Between 5). The population is waiting for a spiritual revival, and it is the birth of Ti Jean—“he who was one day to overturn the sun and the planets”—that will bring life to the island (Schwarz-Bart, Between 22).

After the sun disappears, slavery returns to the island. The plantation owners find a method to continue cultivating sugar cane, but it requires more labor. They begin looking for laborers in the black community, and within a short period of time, the
community is displaced once again, this time behind the plantation owners’ fences. “At the same period, metal fences sprang up around the large estates, now guarded by police and soldiers from the garrison in Basse-Terre. After the last yard of fence was put up no one knew anymore what was whispered around the masters’ tables, for the gates were closed on the black servants and they were no longer allowed out” (Schwarz-Bart, *Between* 83). It is around this time that the same beast that swallowed the sun eats Ti Jean’s pregnant love, Egea. Distraught by her death, Ti Jean accepts death himself; he lets the beast eat him too. It is the marvelous journey that ensues where we encounter the novel’s de-colonial content.

Inside the beast, Ti Jean finds himself temporally and spatially displaced. He had fallen into pre-colonial West Africa. Armed with a musket, he arrives at an opportune time. A small boy is trapped in a tree with a hungry lion waiting below. Fortunately, for the boy, our hero is equipped with a musket, and he shoots and kills the animal, saving the child. It turns out the boy—Maïari—is the king’s son, and this bodes well for Ti Jean. He is welcomed into the community—the Ba’Sonanke—, eventually settling in, marrying (as we saw before) and even receiving a name from the king. His new name is Ifu’umwami, a name, which the king explains, means “‘he [who] says yes to death and no to life’” (Schwarz-Bart, *Between* 148). Despite the hospitality, he comes to learn that the very community that has accepted him had previously killed his grandfather Wademba, who had been born in Africa before being shipped to Guadeloupe.

Ti Jean’s father came from royal blood; he was a member of the neighboring Sonanke tribe and also the king’s son. One day, Sonanke’s king and his family were
killed, except for Wademba, who was sold into slavery to the Europeans. In Sonanke society, anyone who was made a slave was not allowed to be part of the community. Even upon emancipation, the freed slave was not welcomed back. Maïari tells Ti Jean: “The Sonanke say slavery is a leprosy of the blood,’… ‘and if any of them is taken by the enemy, even if for an hour, he cannot return to the tribe. For they say he is already defiled’” (Schwarz-Bart, Between 131). Thus, the young child warns Ti Jean that the Sonanke will not welcome him even though his father was royal blood, for Ti Jean is a descendent of a slave. This is our hero’s first moment where he begins to realize that he is not completely at home in Africa.

Eventually, an older Ti Jean leaves the Ba’Sonanke tribe, but his departure is not on good terms. Members of the community accuse him of witchcraft, and once again, he has to say yes to death. The little boy (now king) who Ti Jean had saved throws the first stone; death becomes him. “Then suddenly the effort to stand up seemed extraordinarily easy. He felt light, nonexistent, like a floating wisp of mist in the dawn sun. And then, with some astonishment, he wondered whether it was his body or his spirit that was confronting the crowd” (Schwarz-Bart, Between 176). At this moment, our hero is between two worlds, between the material and spiritual; yet, we must remember that his placement in Africa is already a marvelous occurrence. With each death, the worlds multiply. Between Guadeloupe and Africa and between life and death, Ti Jean grudgingly continues his journey after the Ba’Sonanke protested his continued presence even after death. “But the cries of the living had touched and hurt him, like a new kind of stoning. So, shaking off the dust of this world, the hero set forth straight away for the
cave of the dead” (Schwarz-Bart, *Between* 178). There, in the Kingdom of the Dead, Ti Jean falls under the spell of a queen with whom he has an amorous relationship, but this world will not be his last for he wants to return to Guadeloupe.

Traveling down a river to flee the Kingdom of the Dead, he eventually reaches the coast, upon which he finds himself in France now in a position between life and death. There, he has a conversation with the apparition of one of his grandfather’s friends, Eusebius, who was a sorcerer in Guadeloupe. Ti Jean tells him of his adventures in Africa, his expulsion from the Ba’Sonanke and his oscillations between life and death. “‘It will make you laugh,’ said Ti Jean. ‘But as you see me now, I don’t belong either to the living or to the dead. I don’t belong to any world’” (Schwarz-Bart, *Between* 221).

His temporal, spatial and ontological displacement leaves him between worlds, and this state makes him ready to return to Guadeloupe. As Helmut Rumpf explains, Ti Jean “recognizes that his life’s mission is not the return to Africa but rather the construction of a new society in Guadeloupe” (235; my translation). Eusebius helps him achieve this desire, changing Ti Jean into a crow and sending him by ship to the island.

Upon his arrival, he finds the place has plunged back even further into slavery and wonders if he is temporally displaced again just like his fall into pre-colonial Africa. However, he comes across someone he knows from his childhood on the island: Anancy, Egea’s brother. He has been strung up in a tree. “‘Ti Jean, petrified, looked at that face risen from his childhood, and some images floated up from a past that he had thought buried forever: Anancy discoursing mournfully about the soul of the black man, then uttering inflammatory words by the gate of the sugar factory, and carried shoulder-high
by the strikers, like a Roman emperor” (Schwarz-Bart, Between 252). This wasn’t
Anancy’s first death; he had been hung before, and like the previous times, even after
death, he returns to the land of the living. Reunited, the two head to the marsh where
they come across the beast that swallowed the sun. There, Ti Jean slays the animal and
cuts it open, releasing the celestial body. The slaying returns color and life to
Guadeloupe.

Mountains and valleys, rivers and human forms came from those glass
entrails in exhalations, in an outpouring and press of suns and moons of all
colors, which rose swiftly, flew in all directions, and disappeared suddenly
in the tops of the trees. Ti Jean, leaning over that fertile womb, gazed and
gazed at the wondrous spectacle of all the worlds returning to the fold,
swiftly, swiftly jostling each other as they went with a frenzy that
bewildered him and brought a smiling reproach to his lips: “Gently, if you
please, my friends, gently. Too much haste and the child is born without a
head.” (Schwarz-Bart, Between 263)

The sun returns to the island; it returns to the world, and it is Ti Jean—offspring of
Guadeloupe—who achieves this feat.

The spiritual and psychological impact of Ti Jean’s triumph is felt around the
island; life is renewed. Ti Jean’s triumph overcomes the community’s precarious
position—the rootlessness, the alienation, the loss—. The dream has come; the farewell
no longer must be shortened to “au rève.” “But now he saw, did our hero, that this end
would be only a beginning: the beginning of something that awaited him there among the
groups of tumbledown huts, those makeshift shelters beneath which people quietly told each other their stories, and dreamed, and already eagerly invented life anew by the light of torches stuck in the earth” (Schwarz-Bart, Between 269). Ti Jean overcomes the spiritual and psychological death that the black community experienced in the colonial/modern system. There is a future in Guadeloupe with no need to rely on Africa and Europe for existence. 86 “The island on which our story takes place is not well known” now is known (Schwarz-Bart, Between 3). It is no longer forsaken; it is the place that saved the sun. Wademba’s refusal to give Ti Jean an African name now makes sense. Ti Jean is offspring of Guadeloupe; an African name would repress him, for as Wademba said, “…if I gave him an African name it would wind itself round his throat like a collar and strangle him” (Schwarz-Bart, Between 20). If Guadeloupe and the other Caribbean islands remain unknown and forgotten—the “little ellipsoidal nothing trembling four fingers above the line” as Aimé Césaire states—, then Schwarz-Bart’s novel serves a dual purpose (14). Materially and spiritually, her novel challenges coloniality. Guadeloupe as an outlier even in the periphery, Schwarz-Bart’s novel challenges such a notion. Yet, I wouldn’t say that Schwarz-Bart is trying to make Guadeloupe the new center. Rather, her act of writing contests and offers an alternative to Eurocentric narratives; the sun, too, can be saved from outside the empire. As Elizabeth Betty Wilson claims in her essay “History and Memory in Un plat de porc aux bananes vertes and Pluie et vent sur Telumee Miracle” regarding Schwarz-Bart’s first novel, “…Schwarz-Bart presents us with an alternative view, a re-vision of history, a re-interpretation of the ways things went, a new possibility for the way things are but don’t
have to be” (187). I would argue that Between Two Worlds possesses the same de-colonial character—a horizontal, alternative perspective.

Despite the criticism that her works are not political, they indeed are. Simply, Schwarz-Bart’s writing challenges Eurocentrism. Materially, her use of narrative replicates the relationship between writing, naming and power; in this sense, we might say the act of writing is (anti-)colonial. However, for Marysé Conde in “The Stealers of Fire: French-Speaking Writers of the Caribbean and Their Strategies of Liberation,” writing is the only domain that was not fully subjugated by the West. “If I were asked to define the literature of Guadeloupe and Martinique, I would say it is the only space of freedom left to these politically, economically, and culturally subjugated islands” (154). Like the Bengali elite in the 19th century, Schwarz-Bart employs the written word as a vehicle to transmit the spiritual domain. But, different from Chatterjee’s example, in the novel, spiritually, the community was dead or, at least, near it. The novel, thus, demonstrates how the material becomes the spiritual. The marvelous myth of Ti Jean and his quest nourishes and brings back to life the souls of a population that bears the weight of coloniality to the most extreme degree. The interweaving of life, death, materiality and spirituality results in a narrative that challenges Eurocentric notions of the divine and reality. Her novel breaks with the coloniality of religion and rationality; it is the marvelous, the real and its mixing that geopolitically, religiously and rationally debase coloniality.
Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, I want to return to Indira Karamcheti’s analysis of the Schwarz-Bart’s works. In her essay, she poses the question: “…do Schwarz-Bart’s texts remain caught in binarism” (Karamcheti 137)? Like her, I, too, have taken up this question in my analysis; yet, my take is different from hers. Karamcheti argues that Schwarz-Bart is an anti-colonial author. She writes: “She [Schwarz-Bart] reverses the values assigned to the European center and West Indian marginality by insisting on the textualization of the marginal. In doing so she ‘transgresses,’ to use Stallybrass’s and White’s term, against the accepted geographic binary structure… Indeed, it could be said of Schwarz-Bart that she has constructed a ‘world upside down’ or a hierarchy inversion” (Karamcheti 137). For the most part, I do not agree with Karamcheti’s assessment that the Guadeloupean author is trying to establish a new center. Rather, I find another critic’s—Natalie Melas’—assessment more in line with mine. As she explains from an interview with Schwarz-Bart, the author “was driven to write Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle out of a similar sense of urgency concerning the imminent loss of local culture” (Melas 199). Schwarz-Bart’s works attempt to capture post-slavery Guadeloupean society, and in this sense, her main goal is not to make Guadeloupe a new center that rejects Europe. Rather, she gives her readers the opportunity to “think with” Guadeloupe and its inhabitants.89

As I have tried to show here, Schwarz-Bart’s novels complicate the colonial/modern boundaries between gender, life, death and relationality. Despite the
fact we may find (anti)colonial thought or constellations within her novels (e.g. the relationship between femininity and corporality), the works include de-colonial ones as well, as demonstrated through alternative understandings of life, death, matrimony and religion. Her works acknowledge coloniality and attempt to undo it from an alternative, interstitial space. As we saw in *Between Two Worlds*, Guadeloupeans do not have to look to Africa and Europe for a sense of place and self; they can act according to their own positionality. Schwarz-Bart’s political—yet not overtly political—novels construct a path for materialities and spiritualities that fall outside of Eurocentrism. Thus, I find it fitting to close this chapter with a quote from Anzaldúa.

But it is not enough to stand on the opposite river bank, shouting questions, challenging patriarchal, white conventions. A counterstance locks into a duel of oppressor and oppressed; locked in moral combat, like the cop and the criminal, both are reduced to a common denominator of violence. The counterstance refutes the dominant culture’s views and beliefs, and, for this, it is proudly defiant. All reaction is limited by, and dependent on, what it is reacting against. Because the counterstance stems from a problem with authority—outer as well as inner—it’s a step towards liberation from cultural domination. But it is not a way of life. At some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal combatants somehow healed so that we are both shores at once and, at once, see through serpent and eagle eyes. Or perhaps we will decide to disengage from the
dominant culture, write it off altogether as a lost cause, and cross the border into a wholly new and separate territory. Or we might go another route. The possibilities are numerous once we decide to act and not react.

(Anzaldúa 100-101)

Schwarz-Bart decides to act rather than react, and that makes all the difference in the world.
Conclusion

To conclude this dissertation, I want to come back to a term I had mentioned at the beginning of chapter four: creolization. As I stated in an endnote, I did not examine the concept in the Schwarz-Bart’s novels for two reasons. First, several scholars have already published articles on the topic in relation to the novels and, second, reading the novels in translation greatly diminished my ability to see what many, like Alexie Tcheuyap, have pointed out about the author’s works: the interweaving of French and Creole linguistic characteristics. Nonetheless, I think the idea of creolization is an important one when discussing coloniality and de-coloniality. The term complicates the boundaries constructed between the European and non-European. Whereas coloniality hinges itself on neat boundaries between the empire and the colony, between the West and the rest, between the male and female, between the light and darkness, creolization blurs the boundary between the two. With creolization, the ‘/’ that separates dichotomies is no longer valid.

In their introduction of The Creolization of Theory, Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih lay the framework for the subsequent essays in the edited work by looking at Theory’s creolization. They take up the state of Theory at this moment in time while examining the evolution of Theory in the 20th century. For them, the capital ‘T’ of Theory refers to 20th century Western theoretical production. By this, they mean all the theoretical heavyweights who many graduate students read in graduate departments.
across the United States, theorists like: Roland Barthes, Walter Benjamin, Louise Althusser, Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Lacan, Sigmund Freud, and, again, the list goes on. We might notice here that the names are of theorists of European descent, and, even for those who know little about theory, they still may know that France was considered the apogee of theoretical thought in the 1960’s and 1970’s. Thus, Theory with a capital ‘T’ seemed to reinforce the Eurocentric myths of coloniality; it would appear that the most complex thought and formulations were coming from Europe, particularly France. However, this belief would be a mistake.

Let’s return to Enrique Dussel’s “Meditaciones anti-cartesianas: sobre el origen del anti-discurso filosófico de la modernidad” to see the problem with claiming that French Theory has been indeed limited to France, or Europe for that matter. In Dussel’s article, he does not take up 20th century Theory; rather he looks at coloniality in relation to philosophy. He finds the West’s strong grip on the field of philosophy problematic and, for that reason, proposes a decolonization of the field. For him, this entails incorporating non-Western thinkers and acknowledging that Europe is (and was) not an insular geocultural entity—a proposal that we might say is de-colonial in nature.

He argues that attributing all of Descartes’ experiences and knowledge to Europe is a mistake because, as he reminds us, the thinker’s influences reached beyond Northern Europe. For example, Dussel tells us that the Jesuits educated Descartes, and, while this may seem unimportant, the religious order was known for its transoceanic reach. In fact, the works of two Jesuit priests influenced the European philosopher. Descartes studied
the works of a Spanish Jesuit priest, Francisco Suárez, and a philosopher, Antonio Rubio, both of whom were living in Spain’s colony *Nueva España*. For Dussel, those familiar with Suárez and Rubio’s texts can note their presence in Descartes’ works. “In all moments of the ‘Cartesian argument’ scholastic influences with the Jesuits can be observed” (Dussel 325). Thus, the point that Dussel is making is that the so-called father of European philosophy’s intellectual beginnings had roots outside of Northern Europe; to say that he was a European thinker does not take in the transatlantic genealogy that influenced his philosophical formulations (Dussel 322-325).

In my chapter on Darío I highlighted the transatlantic nature of his writings. I claimed that many cases, Darío’s line of thought was attuned to Eurocentric discourses that implanted Europe as the center and the rest as the periphery. Darío’s life—his pilgrimage to the Europe and his taste for Parisian life—would make it appear that he fell into the trap (as Hegel had argued) that Europe was the top of the world. Yet, the Nicaraguan poet destroys the supposed unidirectional ray of sunshine emanating from Europe that allegedly enlightens the rest of the world. His poetic excellence rivaled, if not succeeded, his European contemporaries. Let’s not forget what Salgado argued regarding Darío’s literary and cultural contributions. She had postulated that Darío saved Spain and Spanish from cultural and linguistic relegation through his works like *Los raros*. Instances like these—Dussel’s critique of Cartesian thought and Darío’s literary and poetic mastery—debase the supposed eminency of European thought and challenges Eurocentrism. These examples blur the boundaries that coloniality would like us to believe exist between regions, between knowledges and between subjectivities.
We find a very similar argument to Dussel’s in Lionnet and Shih’s introduction regarding theory. On this occasion, the latter make the same case against ‘French Theory.’ For them, relating Theory to only France negates all the transoceanic, rhizomatic knowledges, experiences and events that influenced the theorists. “It is well known that Derrida, Cixous, and [Jacques] Ranciére were born in Algeria, but seldom is this information made explicitly relevant to their thought. Lyotard taught in Algeria between 1950 and 1952… Foucault taught in Tunisia…” (Lionnet and Shih 15). Not only do Lionnet and Shih emphasize the personal experiences outside of France, they also make note of the underlying global context in which these theorists are producing their seminal works. For example, 1968 was the year of protests around the world. At the same time, different schools of thought were in circulation. The two scholars note that “[i]n France, Maoism, structuralism, poststructuralism, and the student protests of 1968 led to what has since been termed la pensée 68 and eventually to what became known as ‘French Theory’” (Lionnet and Shih 3). Thus, deconstructing the ‘French’ from the ‘Theory’ becomes emblematic of Lionnet and Shih’s proposal.

Rather than separate theoretical trends or tendencies or attempt to discern what constitutes Theory and what does not, Lionnet and Shih propose the creolization of theory. In other words, emphasis on creolization replaces emphasis on difference. The objective no longer is to treat knowledge in an insular, hierarchical manner. Dario’s life and works demonstrate the interconnectedness between knowledge and geographies. The goal, then, of the creolization of Theory becomes theorizing “relationality in a way that can encourage scholars to see historical, social, political, and cultural issues as forming
part of a creolized system of knowledge” (Lionnet and Shih 3). Their proposal not only critiques the abstractness of Theory but also challenges the manner in which academia and thought are structured.

Our academic division of labor remains such that we generally fail to account for the degree to which our politics of knowledge, disciplinary formations, and social inequalities are mutually constituted. To think about genealogies of our specialized disciplines is to recognize that, far from being discrete entities, they are much more interconnected and entangled that we generally concede. Objects of study that might first seem antithetical are often historically imbricated, just like creolized cultures or transnational intellectual movements. (Lionnet and Shih 2)

Their proposal dovetails well with one of the objectives of my dissertation: trace (de)colonial thought comparatively and transcontinentally. Creolization, thus, is one of the theoretical apparatuses that help us re-think relationality.

Lionnet and Shih warn against applying creolization too generally though. They argue that the term reflects specific historical moments and geographies, and, accordingly, the origin of the term should not be lost. Perhaps, the emphasis on the term’s origins is to not forget the violent conditions under which creolization initially occurred; colonization forced creolization into being. Nevertheless, they argue that despite the geo-historical specificities, it is a term that lends itself easily to comparativist approaches, given that creolization and all its derivatives apply to many geographies, populations and historical moments. For them, “[c]reolization in the most general sense
refers to the results of a history of contact and to the subsequent process of indigenization or nativization of European settlers. It underscores racial and cultural mixing due to colonization, slavery, and migration” (Lionnet and Shih 22). The process of creolization has occurred around the globe, at different moments in different locations, for example, in the Caribbean, Latin America, Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean and, what Lionnet and Shih term, “the new Europe” (24). Put simply, creolization is transoceanic. Hence, the creolization of theory “enables unexpected comparisons and the use of different analytical tools. It can thus make Theory more pliable, less rigid, substituting exchange and communication for hegemonization” (Lionnet and Shih 31). Like Dario, Naipaul and his works fit into this creolized system of knowledge, even if his thought generally exhibits Eurocentric orthodoxy.

First, the displacement his family experienced as a result of the British Empire embodies the cultural and racial mixing in Trinidad that creolization accounts for. The island’s social composition is primarily a result of the displacement of colonized peoples within the European colonial empires due to global capitalism. Take for example, what Naipaul says about indentured servitude in Trinidad. “As early as 1806 attempts had been made to get Chinese labourers, the government no doubt anticipating emancipation and being unwilling to increase the Negro population” (Naipaul Middle 878; 22%). Not only are Chinese brought to Trinidad, but also indentured servants from Le Havre, France, the Portuguese island of Madeira and India. Though Naipaul tells us that “[t]he Indians proved to be the most suitable; and, with a few breaks, Indian immigration continued until 1917. In all, 134,000 Indians came to Trinidad; most of them were from
the provinces of Bihar, Agra and Oudh” (Naipaul *Middle* 884; 24%). The presence of Indians, Africans and Chinese in an island off the northeastern coast of South America makes sense if we consider the reason: sources of forced or cheap labor in the capitalist world-system.

Second, if we take into account Naipaul’s life. His so-called escape from Trinidad takes him to England. Given his prolific and distinguished career he has not only won many literary prizes, but British royalty also has also officially recognized him. In 1990, England knighted Naipaul, a title that is noted in his official name Sir V.S. Naipaul (Mustafa 7). If colonization displaced non-European individuals in order to grow Europe’s economic capital, in this instance, Naipaul’s literary distinguished ability increases European cultural capital. The two examples are not quite parallel though. In the economic sense, the laborers were often disposable life—zombies—whereas, in the cultural sense, Naipaul, as a valuable individual to Great Britain, is recognized (as demonstrated through his knighthood) and reified in the national imaginary as a result of his literary fame. Nonetheless, creolization takes into account both examples of cultural and racial mixing, and as a result, creolization is a productive concept in relation to my dissertation, despite the fact that I am saving its mention until my conclusion.

Creolization engenders the transoceanic, comparativist, interdisciplinary approach I take in my work. It also is a term that, while born in coloniality, rejects the myths upon with the coloniality of power/knowledge is constructed. Each author is transoceanic in their literature and their lives; they and their works embody the poly-directional cultural and racial contact as a result of colonization; and, they all engage coloniality and
highlight the interruptions or continuity in its dominance as the global constellation of power. Despite on what side of the fence each author remains vis-à-vis coloniality, their creolized, mestizo, hybrid positionality underscores the aporias of coloniality, for they mix the neat divisions that separated the colonized from the colonizer, the non-European from the European, the primitive from the civilized and nature from reason.

Lionnet and Shih’s relationship between creolization and Theory, in particular, also hold a place in my dissertation even though it is not apparent. I would argue that my dissertation as it is here dovetails with their project. In their introduction, they discuss the interplay between Theory, theory, area studies and ethnic studies. While the differences do not concern us here, I would like to intervene by simply asking the following question. Where do literary studies fit in when we talk about the creolization of Theory? If by area studies, we can assume that Latin American studies and Caribbean studies fall within this category, and if we delve a little deeper within Latin American and Caribbean studies themselves, couldn’t we consider Latin American and Caribbean literary studies to be within the scope of these studies? While I cannot speak for Lionnet and Shih, I think literature would fit into their proposal of the creolization of Theory (if I understand their argument correctly). Literature can intervene with theory. To a certain extent, my dissertation plays with this idea, as it interweaves the theoretical concept of the coloniality of power/knowledge and literature. Darío, Naipaul and Schwarz-Bart’s respective works problematize coloniality, facilitating a review, analysis and re-working of the concept, and in each example, they do so from a liminal, creolized space. In this sense, I have to wonder if literature is a lyrical form of theory; the works interpolate and
articulate the theoretical concepts through their metaphorization. Once again, I find myself returning to the lyricism that imbues Darío, Naipaul and Schwarz-Bart’s works.

Nevertheless, using creolization as an example is only just that, an example. There are other terms that crudely describe similar processes: *mestizaje*, hybridity, transculturation, to name a few. Each of the concepts muddies the boundaries that the coloniality of power/knowledge would like us think exist. Thinking with terms like creolization, hybridity and *mestizaje* begin to decolonize coloniality through other modes of understanding the world. A paradigm shift in the way we understand knowledge and thought are critical to achieve de-coloniality—an idea echoed by Lionnet and Shih. “In other words, decolonization requires a revolution in politics, thought, and language, all simultaneously, and it is much more than a reaction than colonialism. Rather, it is an act of self-assertion and self-creation” (Lionnet and Shih 17). The act of self-creation and self-assertion moves beyond (anti)coloniality to de-coloniality.

In her keynote address at Ohio State University, Walsh challenged the audience to shift the way they think about Latin America, and in general terms, about the world. If some debates in Latin America have revolved around the dichotomy, “*pensar desde/pensar sobre*” [think from/think about], she moves beyond the polemic with her proposal “think with.” Rather than think about and think from Latin America, she proposes to ‘think with’ Latin America. In other words, ‘thinking with’ avoids a relationality constructed on difference or on opposition. The dualistic ‘/’ that separates is displaced by the ‘—’ that conjoins; the line’s verticality is lowered to a position of horizontality. For example, Walsh challenges us to think with nature; we might diagram
the relation like this: ‘human—nature.’ Such a proposal breaks down the ‘human/nature’ dichotomy. Consequently, interconnectedness and conviviality displace difference as the dominant paradigm of relationality.

Quijano’s work has been fundamental in identifying the constellation of power that governs this world, and one of my objectives has been to trace of this constellation in the thoughts and literary works of Rubén Darío, V. S. Naipaul and Simone Schwarz-Bart. The simple identification of the origins of their thought is not a de-colonial project. In fact, I would say that it is a colonial one. Despite this, I see my dissertation as a primer paso of a larger research trajectory that embraces epistemological democratization and relationality rooted in conviviality. For this project, my goal has been to examine the manners in which three authors originally from Latin America and the Caribbean grapple with—whether knowingly or not—coloniality. As evidenced from their literature, we come across both (anti)colonial and de-colonial thought, which includes a reiteration or rejection of the power that has constituted geopolitical and cross-cultural relations for the past 500 years.

In each case, the three authors have appropriated narrative as a tool of creation. Their story worlds embrace a lyricism and poeticism that engage (de)colonial thought. Confronted with North American imperialism and European hegemony, Darío’s chronicles and essays reveal the writer’s geopolitical preoccupations and opinions that are as wavering as the oceanic currents that transverse the Atlantic. His diverse and sometimes contradictory opinions reveal a subject with a divided consciousness. Naipaul’s positionality appears to be a more settled than Darío’s; he seems to be at home
with coloniality. The discourses that constitute his literary works are, for the most part, colonial. In his works, the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa and Asia never quite are on the same level as Europe; what separates them is colonial difference. Schwarz-Bart’s creolized story worlds begin to turn coloniality on its head through her representation of life, death, gender and relationality; yet, (anti)coloniality still finds its way into her writings. Each writer not only exposes the transcontinental reach of coloniality, but the transoceanic character inherent in Latin America and the Caribbean as well. In this sense, as a Latin Americanist, I use the three writers to ‘think with’ Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Europe—in other words, all regions of the world.
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Endnotes

Chapter 1

1 In his article “La colonialidad a lo largo y a lo ancho: el hemisferio occidental en el horizonte colonial de la modernidad,” Mignolo follows the main trajectory of Quijano. Mignolo claims “coloniality is constitutive of modernity” (“La colonialidad” 244). When Mignolo speaks of modernity/coloniality, he sees the concept as a double articulation where one cannot exist without the other. In other words, modernity could not have occurred without coloniality. Thus, Mignolo uses the slash to separate modernity and coloniality in the manner that Quijano does.

2 According to Wallerstein in his first volume The Modern World-System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century, the world-system is a social system that can exist according to its own logic and structure. The world-system is composed of structures, groups, borders, tensions and coherences. Since the colonization of American in the 15th century, capitalism forms the nucleus of this world-system. In this system, various political systems simultaneously exist; yet, all of them share the common denominator of only one economic system. Quijano draws upon Wallerstein’s concept in his own formulation of coloniality of power and coloniality of knowledge.


4 Here, Ileana Rodriguez’s argument in “Desorientaciones geográficas, extrañamientos lingüísticos, deposiciones desarticuladas, rediseño de tierras, reescritura de leyes, conversiones fingidas. Culturas en pugna, historias sin fin,” dovetails with Quijano’s argument. Rodriguez analyzes the articulation between geography and knowledge and examines the colonial project in terms of geographies, linguistic (re)inscriptions and (re)territorializations. She establishes the link between language, power and territoriality and examines how Europe re-ordered the rest of the world using Guatemala as an example.

5 Here W.E.B. Du Bois’ concept of double consciousness is useful in understanding the relationship between colonized subjects and Eurocentrism. Double consciousness is the articulation of two epistememes in one subjectivity: an exterior subjectivity and an interior one. Double consciousness is constructed vis-à-vis the exterior, or in other words, by the ‘other.’ In this case, the ‘other’ is the European. Du Bois writes: “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of the others, of measuring one’s soul by the take of the world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body” (cited in Mignolo “La colonialidad” 247). In the interior, double consciousness is constituted as two versions of the self—one constituted by the ‘other’ and the other constituted as a self-image. The subject has to identify him or herself according to the two contradictory epistememes. “Double consciousness, all things considered, is a consciousness of the coloniality of power and the manifestation of subjectivities forged in colonial difference. Local histories vary, because European history itself was changing in the process of creating itself en the expansive movement of the West” (Mignolo “La colonialidad” 247).

6 Here I reproduce Quijano’s use of ‘id-entity’ in place of identity. In his essay ‘Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America,’’ Quijano uses ‘id-entity’ several times. However, in my research, I am unable to find a source explaining the use or definition of the term.

7 Here, the terms ‘coloniality of power’ and ‘colonial nature of power’ appear to be synonyms. He does not distinguish the difference between the two terms. Yet, it is important to note that in his essay “The Colonial Nature of Power and Latin America’s Cultural Experience,” he does not mention or use the term ‘coloniality of power.’

8 In Wallerstein’s first volume The Modern World-System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century, he states that capitalism orders the world according to
capital, the division of labor and geography. Wallerstein argues that the world-system is composed of a globally organized hierarchy of states that have a specific role in the capitalist system. He divides the world in three categories: central states, semi-peripheral states and peripheral areas. The central zone is the place of the well-organized states. These states have a strong political system and an established national culture. The role of these states is to maintain and justify inequality in the world-system, according to our author. They are the sites where accumulation of capital occurs and where specialized jobs are located. Whereas central states enjoy a relatively large amount of autonomy, the peripheral areas tend to experience a minimal amount of it. Often, the peripheral areas find themselves in colonial or neo-colonial situations. The inhabitants of these zones are interpolated in the world-system as laborers. Wallerstein maintains that the semi-periphery diverts the discontent from the periphery’s populations. Often, these states are not seen in a favorable light on a worldwide scale given they suffer from the periphery’s complaints. The semi-periphery becomes the scapegoat of the central states. According to Wallerstein, the semi-periphery acts as a buffer; yet, this buffer takes the blame from both sides. To use the old adage, the semi-periphery can just never win. The periphery and the central states blame the semi-periphery. The latter does have highly specialized jobs like the center but does not produce the primary resources or products either. Wallerstein uses the analogy of middle trading groups to describe the semi-periphery.

9 Another interpretation of Quijano’s use of ethnicity in place of race may be the fact that the only article I have come across where Quijano uses ethnicity is his article co-authored with Immanuel Wallerstein. Perhaps, both authors decide to use the term ethnicity rather than race. Wallerstein uses the term ethnicity in his own works.

10 Wallerstein develops the concept of meritocracy in his Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on the Changing World-System (1991). The concept ties together work ethic and socioeconomic status. The widely circulated and accepted notion that ‘if you work hard, you will be rewarded financially’ represents the concept. In other words, meritocracy is the rationality that justifies inequality based on work ethic.

11 The question of America raises another question here. Both authors say that it was easier to institute capitalism because America did not have the feudal past that Europe did. What is important to also note is the perceived ontological difference between inhabitants of America and Europe. If Europe was to overcome a European feudal past, it meant either convincing European practitioners of feudalism that capitalism was a better alternative or by eliminating the power that these practitioners held. This inevitably would have included some form of violence. As we know in the case of the conquest, on a grand scale, any sort of resistance was eliminated through extermination and genocide. If Europe had massacred populations within its boundaries, the ethical, social, political and religious consequences would have been greater. If Europeans immediately began to question the indigenous populations’ ontological status (as noted in the debate between Sepúlveda and Las Casas), wouldn’t it be easier to justify extermination or genocide of the ‘other’ rather than their own populations? An elucidating essay on this discussion is Juan Ramón Resina’s “Negationism and the Freedom of Speech” (2009).


13 See Quijano’s “La crisis del horizonte de sentido colonial/moderno/eurocentrado” (2010) for more information on debate between Sepúlveda y Las Casas.

14 Using Wallerstein and Quijano’s article on Americanity, couldn’t we say then that modernity here would be Americanity given the fact that the colonization of America represented and engendered newness.


16 See Max Horkheimer’s Eclipse of Reason (1947) for definition and explanation of instrumental reason.

17 See Quijano’s works “Colonialidad of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America” (2000) and “Colonialidad del poder y clasificaciación social” (2000) for differences between Marxism and de-colonial thinking.
Chapter 2

18 Dario’s prologue, which appears in *Crónica política*, begins by Dario saying that he is not a political writer but, as a favor for a friend, he will write the prologue despite its political nature. “If he, author of a historical and political work, writer that has won good battles in journalism, today wants my name—a name exclusively of a man of letters—to appear in the entrance of this civil and tall building, it is simply for the reason of the dash of the architect… I obey with pleasure the duties of the friendly tyranny of friendship, much more in this case than the opportune moment to be a national writer presented to me” (Dario 111). Here, we have Dario saying he rather be a man of letters than a politician.

19 Later on in this chapter, I will cite one of Dario’s chronicles, “El deseo de Paris,” in which he recalls a conversation he had with a young, aspiring Latin American man who wanted to study in Paris. The chronicle describes the harsh realities for Latin Americans who travel there with little money. In other words, he demystifies Paris for aspiring Latin American intellectuals.

20 See Poe Carden’s article “Parnassianism, Symbolism, Decadentism—and Spanish-American Modernism for a brief overview of Parnassianism, Symbolism and Decadentism’s influence in modernismo.

21 All quotes from texts originally published have been translated by the author of this chapter, with the exception of Dario’s poem “A Roosevelt.” Alberto Acereda and Will Derusha are credited with the translation of the poem used here in this chapter.

22 See Quijano’s “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality” for his discussion on subject/object duality in Eurocentrism. I also develop Quijano’s argument in the first chapter.

23 In Dario’s autobiography, he recounts meeting Paul Verlaine and the initial excitement upon hearing that he would meet Verlaine. However, the experience, for Dario, was a sobering one as he found Verlaine repeatedly in an extremely inebriated state (Autobiografía 43).

24 See Guaman Poma’s *La nueva corónica y buen gobierno*.

25 See Lugones’ prologue to Dario’s *Poemas escogidos* (1919) and Blanco-Fombona’s *El modernismo y los poetas modernistas* (1929) for their respective criticisms of Dario.

26 In her book *Modernismo, Modernity and the Development of Spanish American Literature*, Cathy L. Jade argues that modernismo emerged as a contestation of Latin America’s entrance into the world economy and the region’s resulting modernization.

27 In his work *Literatura y sociedad en Améica Latina*, Françoise Perus also analyzes Latin America’s economic transformations at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. Like Rama, Perus argues that the development of the capitalist system on a continental scale in Latin America created or reinforced a neocolonial relationship within Latin America and with Europe. For Perus, the capitalist development was imperial in nature, and for that reason, he claims that from 1880 to 1910, Latin America saw further subordination in the world-system. He attributes two reasons for the subordination. First, the development follows the international imperialist division of labor. Within the world-system, Latin America was the source of primary resources. Second, the investments that Latin America primarily saw were mainly in the forms of transportation, mining and large-scale agricultural development. These investments largely benefited the local elite and international investors who owned the companies.

28 In his work *Postmodernism, or, the Logic of Late Capitalism*, Fredric Jameson discusses how the cultural and the economic become intertwined. The conditions of late stage capitalism had permeated the cultural domain where consumption and consumerism came to define the cultural in “a continuous reciprocal interaction and feedback loop” (Jameson xiv-xv).

29 In Dario’s *Prosas Profanas*, he references the reino interior in his “Palabras preliminares,” by claiming the first law is the poet’s ability to create. The reino interior refers to the poet’s license for poetic creation, fitting to his or her liking.

30 It is important to note that by democratization, Rama is not claiming that Latin America’s cultural domain sees full-fledged democratic practices; rather, the cultural trend is towards democratization as more people are able to participate in cultural production due to a process of decentralization. “América Latina se incorpora entonces a la cultura democratizadora, nombre con el cual quiero significar que no se trata
aún de una plena cultura democrática, en la rara acepción del término, sino de una cultura moderna, internacional, innovadora, que sigue el proceso de democratización que está viviendo la sociedad. El descentramiento de la vida intelectual se intensifica, aumenta el número de sus ejercitantes, la producción crece, la difusión en el medio social es muy alta y la competitividad profesional, que puede medirse por la cantidad de polémicas, se vuelve mayor” (Rama Máscaras 39).

One of these chronicles, “Nueva York bajo la nieve,” by Martí details a snowstorm that hit New York in March of 1888. Martí marvels at the power of nature and the ineptitude of technology to protect people in New York from the strong storm. Martí uses the event to raise awareness of the potential downsfalls of an increased dependency on technology. Technological failures such as the result of the snowstorm lead to the suffering and death of many New Yorkers.

32 See Dario’s prologue to Poe’s work in Quince prólogos de Rubén Darío, compiled by José Jirón Terán.

33 In “El triunfo de Calibán,” Dario states that he has “been a supporter of a free Cuba” (162). Sergio Ramírez also notes Dario’s support of an independent Cuba in his book El señor de los tristes.

34 In “Tradicionalismo y modernidad en la cultura latinoamericana,” José Joaquín Brunner argues that Latin America is a heterogeneous continent. For Brunner, Latin America’s modernity has always had a post-modern characteristic to it, noted in the continent’s diverse and disparate cultures. Néstor García Canclini in his Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity examines the ambiguity of the concept of identity vis-à-vis Latin America. Like Brunner, García Canclini claims that Latin America is best understood in terms of its heterogeneity. Nonetheless, García Canclini goes beyond a simple heterogeneous characterization of the continent and includes a multi-temporal facet in describing Latin America. He maintains that Latin America has had “the pride of being postmodern for centuries” (García Canclini 6).

35 Rodó uses the term nordomanía to refer to those who wanted to see Latin America emulate the United States. See Rodó’s Ariel (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1987) for his complete argument.

36 For Carlos Jáuregui in his essay “Calibán, ícono del 98. A propósito de un artículo de Rubén Darío,” Miranda represents a virginal/maternal figure who “extends her arms to ‘Latin’ idealism” (444). Jáuregui’s article also provides an extensive discussion on Darío’s chronicle and his use of Calibán. Jáuregui argues that “El triunfo de Calibán” represents la crisis finisecular in Latin America as the region confronted the uncertainties of modernity, imperialism and of a Latin American identity. In addition to Jáuregui’s piece, Sergio Ramírez’s Señor de los tristes and Iris M. Zavala’s El rapto de América y el síntoma de la modernidad also analyze Darío’s discourse in “El triunfo de Calibán.”

37 J. F. Normand in his essay “Las ideas políticas en Rubén Darío” mentions one of Darío’s poet works where Darío refers to himself as a child of America and a grandchild of Spain. According to Normand, such a claim on Darío’s part opts for a racial-political alliance based on the Latin race rather than a geopolitical, continental alliance (438).

38 Erick Blandón writes in his essay “Presencia de Rubén Darío en los discursos de mestizaje” that Sarmiento’s duality ‘civilización/barbarism’ had great influence on Darío, as noted by his numerous references to the dichotomy throughout his essays, chronicles, letters and poetry.

39 Darío first published Los raros in 1896. The work consists of 20 literary portraits of intellectuals in North America, Europe and Latin America. However, it is important to note that the majority of the writers detailed in the book are European. Darío only includes two Latin American writers, Cuba’s José Martí and Brazil’s Eugenio de Castro. The title Los raros refers to the rare individual who, in the opinion of Darío, possesses a gift for intellectual, philosophical and literary thought. Besides the writers, he includes in Los raros, he published other newspaper articles that continued the same trajectory. For example, in Escritos inéditos, editor E. K. Mapes includes Darío’s La Nación newspaper article “Los raros: Nietzsche” published in 1894.

40 Günther Schmigalles gives us the publication dates for “Las letras hispanoamericanas en París” in his annotations of the text.

41 See Ángel Rama’s analysis of Darío’s “La producción intelectual latinoamericana: autores y editores” in his work Rubén Darío y el modernismo.
Colonialism and then defends the so-called human face of Western colonialism (2). In other words, the ideology of colonialism (and coloniality) is sustained through Eurocentric, racist and capitalist discourses. Others like Eugene Goodheart also share a similar argument to Eid’s. Eugene Goodheart argues in his essay “Naipaul...
and the Voices of Negation” that Naipaul’s non-Western characters are all inept and incapable of peace, order and success in modernity. Their Western imitations are always imperfect, keeping them from ever achieving the West’s grandeur and triumph.

In a talk titled “Our Universal Civilization” at the Manhattan Institute in 1990, Naipaul all but says that universal civilization is Western civilization. In true Naipaul fashion, he subtly lets his audience know that the universal civilization should be Western. He conveys this message by dedicating the bulk of his talk to his criticism of Islam. In short, he finds that Islam is a belief system that inhibits self-expression and intellectualism. Naipaul also finds the periphery to hamper the same qualities as well. For him, the West gave him the opportunity to realize his “pursuit of happiness” (Naipaul “Universal”).

Joseph Conrad’s works influenced Naipaul and his own style of writing. For example, the reference to the so-called dark continent is an allusion to Conrad’s Heart of Darkness. Naipaul uses the literary trope of darkness in many of his works.

One of the commonalities between the two works is Naipaul’s continued use of Greco-Roman history in understanding and evaluating the rest of the world. We already saw in A Bend in the River how Naipaul inscribes the landscape with European history, so it is no surprise that he does it once again in his evaluation of the West Indies. Thieme says that, in the case of The Middle Passage, Naipaul “also resorts to employing a favourite Victorian analogy for Empire, the parallel with imperial Rome, in quoting Tacitus for one of the epigraphs of the Trinidad chapter (42), and referring to contemporary black protest in the Caribbean as ‘the last, delayed Spartacan revolt’ (91)” (145).

One of the best examples of double consciousness in Naipaul’s works is The Mimic Men. The novel centers on a Caribbean country that recent gained independence from colonial rule. Naipaul writes that the novel “was about colonial men mimicking the condition of manhood, men who had grown to distrust everything about themselves. Some pages of this book were read to me the other day—I hadn’t looked at it for more than thirty years—and it occurred to me that I had been writing about colonial schizophrenia” (“Two Worlds” 485). This colonial schizophrenia comes the “warring ideals” in the previously colonized subjects (Du Bois 7).

In one instance, MacKay reveals his Eurocentric positionality when he places the blame for the racial conflict in England on the blacks. “A lot of these black fellers provoke the English people,” Mr. Mackay said, putting an end to the discussion. Like all good West Indians, he was unwilling to hear anything against England” (Naipaul Middle 10).

In his 2002 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, Naipaul explains that as a writer he is drawn to darkness. “When I became a writer those areas of darkness around me as a child became my subjects. The land; the aborigines; the New World; the colony; the history; India; the Muslim world, to which I also felt myself related; Africa; and then England, where I was doing my writing” (Naipaul “Two Worlds” 484). Here, it appears that he attempts to temporally distance himself from his use of darkness as a literary trope. He confines the use to the beginning of his career. Yet, this trope is found in his latest work as well. Half a Life contains the same imagery: emphasis on darkness in Africa and India. In my opinion, he has never moved beyond his fixation with darkness.

Naipaul makes the allusion to the slave ship in the text. Noting that the trip from England to St. Kitts is five days, he writes that the journey on a slave ship would generally take three months (Naipaul Middle 377).

Mahajaras were local Indian leaders who, in exchange for colonial orthodoxy, often had the support of the British.

Chandran blames his heritage for his shortcomings in bed. He writes: “That philosophical-practical way of dealing with sex belongs to our past, and that world was ravaged and destroyed by Muslims. Now we live like incestuous little animals in a hole. We grope all our female relations and are always full of shame. Nobody talked about sex and seduction at him, but I discover now that it is the fundamental skill all men should be trained in” (Naipaul Half a Life 111).

Ana herself is of mixed race. Her grandfather had moved from Portugal to Mozambique where he had offspring with an African woman. He initially embraced the intercultural and interracial mixing but then rejects it later on in his life. “Ana’s grandfather wished, in this period, to recover the European personality
he had shed. He sent his two half-African daughters to Europe to be educated; it was no secret that he wished them to marry Portuguese” (Naipaul Half a Life 143).

In his article “V.S. Naipaul’s Half a life, Magic seeds and globalisation,” Robert Balfour claims that in Half a Life, Naipaul demonstrates that globalization is not only detrimental to the non-Western subject but also the Western one. Balfour writes: “What is different about these two novels [Half a Life and Magic Seeds] is that they political and social struggles of the decolonized are now relocated globally, and the enabled Western subject, and the disempowered decolonized subject are revealed to be equally vulnerable to globalization” (6). The Correias’ fear of impending doom in both the West and postcolonial regions of the world seem to support Balfour’s argument that Naipaul represents globalization as problematic for all.

This idea in the novel is best illustrated by one particular example. The Correias did not invest in Africa, save a beach house they had purchased. They had entrusted the care of the house to a local man. One day, after a meal with Chandran and Ana, they head to the house to find it in complete disarray. The house is uninhabitable.

In the interview with Mukherjee and Boyers, Naipaul claims that “Asiatics do not read, of course; they are a non-reading people. If they read, they read for magic” (5). He also does not “count the African readership and I don’t think one should. Africa is the land of bush, again, not a very literary land” (Mukherkee and Boyers 6).

Chapter 4

See Jeanne Garane’s “A Politics of Location in Simone Schwarz-Bart’s Bridge of Beyond,” Kathleen Gyssels’ “Fils et Filles D’Anancy: Diaspora and (Un)woven Identity in Schwarz-Bart and Marshall’s Fiction” and Julie Huntington’s “Rethinking Rootedness in Simone Schwarz-Bart’s Ti Jean L’horizon” for a discussion of these images.

In this chapter, I use the English translations of Schwarz-Bart’s novels. I recognize the limitations that this may present, especially given the significance of her melding of French and Creole in the novels. As Nadène Veldwachter points out in her essay “Simone Schwarz-Bart, Maryse Condé and Raphaël Confiant in English Translation: Texts and Margins,” translation adds another layer of mediation between the author and the reader, which can be problematic given the translator’s ability to alter the original text and/or meaning (231).

Mignolo has already outlined the distinction between de-colonial and post-colonial. For him, the difference between the two is genealogical. De-colonial studies emerge outside of coloniality’s center while post-colonial studies’ genealogy is rooted in European tradition.

See Quijano’s article “Questioning ‘Race’” for his discussion on race and gender.

The novel presents another axis of analysis that revolves around gender, race and labor that I do not analyze here in the chapter. For a period in her life, Telumee works on a plantation as a domestic worker. There, her experiences are reminiscent of slavery. Living in a shed behind the house, the white plantation owners berate her and the master of the house even attempts to rape her.

In her essay “The Stealers of Fire: French-Speaking Writers of the Caribbean and Their Strategies of Liberation,” Maryse Condé argues that Schwarz-Bart liberates women from their representation as spiritual and biological mothers. Condé claims that Teluume’s inability to have children and keep her ‘adopted’ daughter, Sonore, with her breaks the dominant representation of femininity through motherhood (162-163). Gil Zehava Hochberg argues in her article “Mother, Memory, History: Maternal Genealogies in Gayl Jones’s Corregidora and Simone Schwarz-Bart’s Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle” makes a similar argument to Condé’s. However, she takes one step further to argue that Teluume’s inability to have children not only separates maternity from a defining trait of womanhood, but also uncouples women from being the source of collective memory (Hochberg 8).

According to Elizabeth Betty Wilson, the names subvert the tradition of giving slaves “mock-heroic names” and instead, confer upon them Greek and Latin names that connote “genuine heroism” (186).
Wilson’s interpretation reveals an (anti-)colonial aspect of Schwarz-Bart’s novel. Appropriating Greek and Latin names to demonstrate strength, power and heroism still operates within the colonial/modern apparatus.

72 In her chapter “Mujeres y estructuras de poder en los Andes: De la etnohistoria a la política” from Violencias (re)encubiertas en Bolivia, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui examines the gender relations before colonization. She claims that a species of complementarity existed between men and women in Andean society. For example, Cusicanqui explains that while men specialized in the art of war, expanding and defending their society, women were responsible for maintaining society’s internal order, such as rituals and textiles (185). For Cusicanqui, the division in labor did not necessarily mean gender inequality. “The Andean complementarity system did not imply, therefore, the existence of a double standard in women’s daily life, with a system of rules valid for men and another for women, both hidden by a normativity in egalitarian appearance” (Cusicanqui 187; my translation). Rather, men and women had different, yet complementary functions that presupposed two different paradigms. Cusicanqui’s example of the sun and the moon articulates the relationship between the two genders. “…the Sun and the Moon are the epitome of the complementary opposition man-woman, not only in the Andes but also in many other cultures. The lines of ancestry lowered through successive lower deities until resulting in mortals: man and women, each one of whom specialized in specific ritual obligations, that should follow all matri- or patri-lineage” (Cusicanqui 188; my translation). Thus, this complementarity produced a coexistence—convivencia—where both men and women fulfilled particular yet complementary and reciprocal roles. It is in this vane that I want to use her concepts of complementarity and coexistence (convivencia) in relation to Schwarz-Bart’s novel. Though, Cusicanqui does warn that gender inequality did exist in Andean society, and accordingly, she wants to avoid a naïve idealization of Andean culture. I, too, want to avoid such a reading as well.

73 Later in this chapter, I will be discussing Maria T. Smith’s African Religious Influences on Three Black Woman Novelists: The Aesthetics of “Vodun.” In her book, she discusses the representations and presence of Vodun in Schwarz-Bart’s novel. Smith argues that the interdependency present in the novel coincides with Vodun beliefs.

74 All the Difference in the World: Postcoloniality and the Ends of Comparison, Natalie Melas tells us that Schwarz-Bart based the novel off of a woman in the writer’s community, Stéphanie Priccin. The novel’s protagonist resembles Priccin (Melas 199).

75 In his article “Zombie trouble: zombie texts, bare life and displaced people,” Jon Stratton argues that zombies can be read as a metaphor of displacement. He argues that the popularity of zombies coincides with the migration of people to Western nations. For Stratton, he argues that the zombie embodies the fear that Western nations have of the influx of migrants and refugees. He anchors his analysis of zombies, displacement and the state in Gorgio Agamben’s theoretical concept of ‘bare life.’ For Stratton, zombies are a form of bare life.

76 See Jeanne Garane’s “A Politics of Location in Simone Schwarz-Bart’s Bridge of Beyond” for an in-depth analysis of the concept of rootedness in Schwarz-Bart’s novel.

77 Later in this chapter I will analyze these concepts in relation to coloniality.

78 Yet, today, there are attempts to defy death, cryogenics being one of them. Cryogenics attempts to ‘suspend’ death. This deep-freeze places faith in future scientific procedures that could reanimate frozen individuals. This ‘suspended’ state operates within a rationalist framework that relies on science and human capability. The example of cryogenics reveals the excesses of Descartes’ formulation. By this, I mean that rationality itself has converted into the divine. Cryogenics places faith in the fact that humans will be able to use reason to overcome death.

79 Mbembe’s description of the plantation marks the intersection between bare life and disposable life; the former is a political term while the latter, an economic. Calling the plantation a state of exception, Mbembe is politicizing it and thus, ultimately establishing the relationship between the political and capitalism. If we take into account Jameson’s argument regarding late stage capitalism, here the plantation reveals the long history of capitalism’s power in constituting political, cultural and ontological relationships. In the example of the plantation, capitalism engenders the state of exception.
In her essay “History and Memory in Un Plat de Porc aux Bananes Vertes and Pluie et Vent Sur Telumee Miracle,” Elizabeth Betty Wilson claims that Schwarz-Bart addresses the community’s collective psyche in The Bridge of Beyond. Her story is part of the story of a people, who is in this second text [The Bridge of Beyond], although uprooted and ‘marginal,’ have the power to reconstruct their lives and to build communities which enable them to survive intact. Schwarz-Bart is here more essentially concerned with the psyche of a people than with their political or physical situation” (Wilson 180). I agree with Wilson here and would extend her argument to include Between Two Worlds. The following analysis underscores the collective psyche in relation to life and death.

Again, bare life refers to the relationship between the political and life whereas disposable life represents the economic intervention in life.

The concept of rootedness haunted me a bit in my preparation for this chapter as rootedness (read territorialization) implicates the colonial/modern concept of nation. There is no doubt that Schwarz-Bart relies on imagery of rootedness in her novels. Both The Bridge of Beyond and Between Two Worlds use tree imagery to describe both protagonists and even the community in Guadeloupe. I had originally deemed her use of the concept as an (anti-)colonial practice; nonetheless, while reading Julie Huntington’s article “Rethinking Rootedness in Simone Schwarz-Bart’s Ti Jean L’horizon,” I came across an argument that convinced me it was not. Huntington notes that Schwarz-Bart chooses the tree as the image of rootedness rather than others like the rhizome. She notes that Deleuze and Guattari argue that the tree is a symbol that pervades Western culture, and we might find this relationship problematic especially given my argument that Schwarz-Bart’s works are de-colonial. Despite the image’s important in the West, Huntington argues that Schwarz-Bart’s use of the same imagery is different. “Schwarz-Bart subverts occidental authority, breaking apart the fixed polarized nodes that comprise its binary modes of categorization and shattering the stratified levels that compose its hegemonic hierarchy” (Huntington 603). Her use of the tree as the metaphor of rootedness (1) breaks down the duality ‘tree/West’ and (2) incorporates a multi-valency. As Huntington points out, Schwarz-Bart’s conception of Antillean identity does not preclude Africa and Europe; rather, it is an amalgam of various sources. Such a relationship breaks with the Eurocentric myth that Europe as an insular geopolitical entity whose roots did not venture out beyond the empire’s boundaries.

Here, I must point out that I am using a rationalist, dualist approach to intervene in Chatterjee’s argument, and I recognize the problematics with such intervention. However, as Mignolo points out in his formulation critical border theory, unraveling modernity/coloniality necessitates thinking from the border zones.

In her article “Second Vision: Antillean Versions of the Quest in Two Novels by Simone Schwarz-Bart,” Kitzie McKenney argues that while the Schwarz-Bart’s novels are quest stories, they break with the norms of such model. Using Joseph Campbell’s work on the definition and classification of quest literature, McKinney argues that Schwarz-Bart’s breaks with three norms of quest stories: masculine protagonists, privilege of the spiritual realm and a journey outside of the community. She argues that “written in two different registers about characters of different genders, these works both demythologize traditional quest patterns and offer new versions of the quest able to accommodate Antillean women and men who set out on different paths to see the inner peace that comes when one has found one’s rightful place in the world. In this very special way, Schwarz-Bart’s works propose a fresh vision of humanity and a specifically Antillean ‘modernity’ of spirit and language” (McKinney 651). What is important about McKinney’s observation is that she is underscoring the de-colonial nature of Schwarz-Bart’s novels; the author plays with the traditional borders of quest stories to reflect a different reality. She

See Natalie Melas’ All the Difference in the World: Postcoloniality and the Ends of Comparison for an analysis of the master/slave dialectic in relation to death.

Though, I agree with Julie Huntington’s argument in her essay “Rethinking Rootedness in Simone Schwarz-Bart’s Ti Jean L’horizon” regarding Antillean identity. She claims that the novel does not negate African and European roots and influence in Guadeloupe, and for that reason, she argues that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s concept of the rhizome and Édouard Glissant’s work regarding relation. For Huntington, Schwarz-Bart takes into account the transcultural, transatlantic connections between
Guadeloupe, Africa and France by setting Ti Jean’s quest in all three places. The search for Antillean (Guadeloupean) identity requires and acknowledge of the transatlantic flows that characterize Guadeloupe and its inhabitants. Despite my inclusion of Huntington’s argument here in the endnote, I do not want to diminish the importance her argument has with mine. I, too, recognize the transatlantic, rhizomatic and relational realities of the Caribbean. However, I would extend her argument to say that within coloniality/modernity, we would be hard pressed to find a society or culture where transoceanic, rhizomatic and relational flows of people and knowledge did not reflect the social, political, cultural, religious and historical ‘realities.’

87 See Nadège Veldwachter’s “Simone Schwarz-Bart, Maryse Condé and Raphaël Confiant in English Translation: Texts and Margins” for an overview of the debate regarding the (non)political nature of Schwarz-Bart’s work. Veldwachter explains that many French critics have complained that Schwarz-Bart’s works are not overtly political, like other Caribbean writers. For Veldwachter and other critics, such a complaint establishes norms for Caribbean literature, thereby reinforcing a colonial relationship between Europe and the Caribbean. What we might additionally emphasize in relation to the criticism is that the avoidance of overtly political content is in itself a political act when there is an expectation for it.

88 I make this argument having taken into what Gloria Nne Onyeorziri claims in her “Women’s Discourse and the Semiology of Cultural Identity: Simone Schwarz-Bart’s Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle and Patrick Chamoiseau’s Texaco” about Schwarz-Bart’s novel as a quasi-biography. She writes: “What seems particularly revealing is that, whether the text is written by a man or woman, whether or not it is overtly political in its representation of women’s lives, it shows how the story of story-telling itself can be and is being rewritten in the form of quasi-biographies” (Onyeorziri 39). Thus, as she explains earlier in her text, the act of writing is an act of empowerment. The text becomes a means to exteriorize the spiritual.

89 In her keynote address, Catherine Walsh explains that rather than ‘think from’ or ‘think about,’ we should begin to ‘think with.’ Thinking with avoids many problematics that have emerged within the ‘from/about’ debate and avoids a hierarchical, colonial way of thinking. ‘Thinking with’ does not privilege one over the other.