
Preamble: The Historical Foundation of Modernity/ Coloniality and the Emergence of Decolonial Thinking

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I

Readers familiar with current intellectual debates in Latin America, as well as among Latin Americanists and Latino and Latina scholars in the United States, are also familiar with the concept of “modernity/coloniality.” Readers in other disciplines, especially those in Europe, may not be so familiar with these concepts. With this in mind, I will start by spelling out what is at stake here; and why it matters to the understanding of the spirit of this collection, as Sara Castro-Klaren explains in her Introduction.

In the many books and essays on “modernity” published since the late 1970s in Europe and in the United States, the word “coloniality” never appears. Modernity seems to be a totality (“what you see is what it is”), with its good and bad aspects, which is at the same time the inevitability of the unfolding of history. Confronted with the illusion of such a totality, scholars and intellectuals trying to find their way have coined terms such as “peripheral modernities,” “subaltern modernities,” “alternative modernities,” “postcolonial modernities,” and so forth. Fredric Jameson responded to this diversified scenario with a clear-cut “singular modernity” (Jameson, 2002). If we have a singular modernity, those who dwell in the periphery (intellectually and linguistically, not just physically), who do not belong to the Euro-American singular modernity, have to fight for the rights of people and events that have been forgotten, silenced, ignored, and neglected, to argue that, for example, Zara Yacob (a seventeenth-century Ethiopian philosopher) has to be legitimized as a philosopher of modernity (Teodros Kiros, 2005). One could argue (as did Fischer, 2004 and Chapter 15 in this volume) that the Haitian Revolution was disavowed as modernity. Such disavowal had enormous historical, ethical, political, and epistemic (or gnoseological, or whatever word one would like to use to keep to the fore the principles of knowledge that are always implied in any and every conception of the world) consequences.

Historically, the Haitian Revolution was not accorded the same importance as the bourgeois French Revolution, the white American revolution in the British colonies, or even the wars of independence fomented by Creoles of Spanish and Portuguese descent in South America after the Haitian Revolution. The disavowal is, in my argument, a direct consequence of the logic of coloniality: by 1804 blacks were not considered to have the same level of humanity by which they could have claimed and gained *freedom* by themselves. Slavery was unjust, many progressive European intellectuals claimed, and slaves were not “allowed” (by the white intelligentsia) to have their own freedom. That is why whites were ready to give them *liberty*, but not the freedom that a French citizen enjoyed. The Tupac Amaru uprising in Peru “failed,” but for the Haitian revolutionary it was one episode in a genealogy of decolonization in the Americas. Perhaps, today, the elections in Bolivia should be read, on the one hand, as the continuation of Tupac Amaru (and previous uprisings in the Andes), and on the other, of the Haitian Revolution in the Caribbean. National and imperial histories do not invite us to think in terms of genealogies of freedom takers, blacks and Indians. They are, for imperial discourses, different “races.” From a decolonial perspective, however, Indians and blacks were the first to suffer the consequences of imperial expansion and the formation of Eurocentrism (e.g., the superiority of Christians, and then of the whites).

These are some of the reasons why I will argue that “modernity” is a concept inextricably connected with the geopolitics and body-politics of the knowledge of white European and North Atlantic males. “Modernity,” in other words, is not the natural unfolding of world history, but the regional narrative of the Eurocentric worldview. Once the narrative was put in place, and it flew all around the world as an integral part of imperial designs, the rest of the non-Euro-American world had to deal with the concept. Thus, we can understand why there is a proliferation of “alternative modernities” as well as Jameson’s call to order to a “singular” modernity.

From the early 1990s the darker side of modernity started to emerge. Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano made a statement in the very title of an article that marked a turning point in the politics and ethics of scholarship: “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality.” A simple semiotic analysis reveals that “coloniality” is missing the equivalent of “rationality” that accompanies “modernity” and, secondly, that “coloniality” is something different from “modernity/rationality” (Quijano, 1991, 1992, 2000).

The concept opened up new vistas in relation to two dominant paradigms up to that point. One was represented by the Uruguayan and Peruvian critics, Ángel Rama and Antonio Cornejo Polar, who focused on the “lettered city” (Rama, 1982) and “cultural heterogeneity” (Cornejo Polar, 1994). The first placed the emphasis – inflecting his experiences of living on the South Atlantic coast of Latin America – on the political power of alphabetic writing, not just in literature but in the affairs of the state. The second brought forward his experiences of living in the Andes, where the presence of indigenous people shaped the histories of these mountains, as we witnessed in the presidential election of Evo Morales in Bolivia. Rama – in Uruguay,

closer to France than to the Andes – took the lead in conceptualizing the “lettered city” from Michel Foucault’s *Archeology of Knowledge* and *The Order of Things*. Cornejo Polar, in Peru (between Arequipa and Lima), and closer to the profound memories of Tawantinsuyu and the Spanish conquest, took his lead from another Peruvian thinker, José Carlos Mariátegui (in the 1920s), who was very aware and critical of Spanish colonial legacies as well as the US need for imperial domination in South America. And Cornejo Polar also took his lead from the exceptional Peruvian writer, José María Arguedas who, born into a Creole family, crossed the colonial divide and found himself growing up, literally, in the kitchen, where he found his cultural Indian mother and his cultural Indian brother. By “cultural” here I mean that it was through living with the Indian servants of his Creole “genetical” parents that Arguedas learned to love what he was taught to despise.

During the same years that Quijano published his article, Argentinean literary and cultural critic Néstor García Canclini published his ground-breaking book whose theme was the bringing together of hybridity and modernity (García-Canclini, 1989). García-Canclini and Jesús Martín Barbero (a Spaniard living in Colombia; Martín Barbero, 1987) introduced the cultural studies turn in Latin America. The “lettered city” was complemented by the prominence that new technology, television, and the media in general had in the research and works of Martín Barbero and García Canclini himself. Beatriz Sarlo (1988) in Argentina and Renato Ortiz (1985) in Brazil became associated with the former names. Sarlo moved from literature to popular culture; and divided her energy between scholarship and politics. Ortiz focused on globalization (as also did Canclini later on). What all these authors share is a concern with modernity in Latin America, its formation and transformation, its pros and cons.

“Coloniality of power” reactivated a spatial epistemic shift that had had its moments since the sixteenth century (Guamán Poma de Ayala, the Taky Onkoy; see Burga, 1988, Castro-Klaren, 1993 – indigenous uprisings during the colonial era, slave maroons, etc.) but that for several reasons had never been articulated in confrontation with the generalized idea that there is only one game in town, modernity; and that it could be peripheral or central, “real” or alternative; hegemonic or subaltern, and so on. Colonial history, imperial domination, and racism became cornerstones in describing the colonial matrix of power (e.g., coloniality of power). The shift was to bring to the fore, as another perspective, the interpretation of the Americas and of modern/colonial history.

Peruvian dissident José Carlos Mariátegui was one of Quijano’s genealogical sources. The other was dependency theory. While dependency theory made the slavery between a “person” master and a “non-person” slave into a metaphor for the slavery between a master-country and a slave country, decolonial thinking extended the analysis to the sphere of knowledge (or, to make an analogy, to political epistemology) and subjectivity. If, beyond this analysis, dependency theory presupposed independence (or the sovereignty of the dependent country), the critical analysis of the colonial matrix of power leads to decolonial thinking: no longer independence within the same system of knowledge in which political theory and political economy are founded, but

decoloniality starting from a questioning of the reasons and the interests that motivate the existing imperial rationality. Although the initial concept of coloniality of power was further developed by Quijano himself and others, the basic conceptual structure shared by all participants in the project consists of four interrelated sociohistorical domains glued together by the historical foundation of the modern concept of “racism.” Let’s take one step at a time. The four sociohistorical domains in which the logic of coloniality or the colonial matrix of power operate are the following:

- 1 *control of the economy* based on appropriations of land (and subsequently natural resources) and control of labor; financial control of indebted countries;
- 2 *control of authority*, based on the creation of imperial institutions during the foundation of the colonies or, more recently, by the use of military strength, forced destitution of presidents of countries to be controlled, the use of technology to spy on civil society, etc.
- 3 *control of gender and sexuality*, having the Christian and bourgeois secular family as a model and standard of human sexual heterosexual relations; and heterosexuality as the universal model established by God (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries), first, and then by Nature (from the nineteenth century to the present);
- 4 *control of knowledge and subjectivity* by assuming the theological foundation of knowledge, after the Renaissance, and the egological foundation of knowledge, after the Enlightenment; and by forming a concept of the modern and Western subject first dependent on the Christian God, and then on its own sovereigns, reason and individuality.

While dependency theorists made the economy (and its links with the state) the central and only focus, coloniality of power reoriented and enlarged the analytic dimension, and did not touch the imperial complicity between knowledge, racism, and patriarchy, the colonial matrix of power giving the subjective dimension a crucial role both in the formation and transformation of the colonial matrix of power as well as in the location of decolonial struggles – decoloniality of knowledge became the site of the struggle without which there can be no decolonization of the state nor of the economy. Domination is not just economic, but it operates at all levels of interrelation between the different domains of the colonial matrix or power. Why was the invention of racism (and the implied patriarchy) crucial to hold together and implement the colonial matrix of power? Race, according to North Atlantic scholarship (in France, England, and the United States) is a post-Enlightenment invention (Eze, 1997). For others, “race” and “racism,” although anachronistic in the meaning they acquired in the nineteenth century, had already been conceived in the sixteenth century in the hierarchical classification of people as human beings. From the perspective of the colonial matrix of power, whether “race” or “caste” were the terms in which the chain of human beings was conceived is a moot point. There are, of course, historical differences in the theological vocabulary of the sixteenth century and the egological vocabulary of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The point is not “what is race?” Nor is it whether race exists, is a social construct, or is different from caste. The point is that Spanish men of letters and officers of the state established the historical foundation of a classification of human beings according to their religion

or lack thereof. Thus, while Muslims and Jews had religions with firm historical bases, Indians and blacks in America had none. If in Spain blood was the sign that divided some people from others in the Spanish colonies, color became the signpost which distinguished white Christians from Indians and from blacks. In other words, in Spain blood connected human beings with religion and in the New World, blood connected human beings with skin color, barbarian mores, and human underdevelopment (e.g., Indians were on a par with women and children). *Mestizos*, mulattos, and *Zambos* were the result of the mixing of the three prime human stocks, Europeans, Africans, and Indians from Tawantinsuyu to Anahuac. What matters, then, is not whether these three stocks were caste or race. What matters is that “racism” was established as a classificatory system in which (a) the classification itself was determined by Christian and European men; (b) they defined themselves as superior in relation to the other groups classified (by religion, by blood, and by color); (d) since other human groups were denied their possibility of classification, only Christian European men could determine that they were the point of arrival of the human race.

If, then, the classificatory system that ranks human beings was established by white European Christians, they were men and, therefore, women also were left out of the locus of enunciation that classified non-European and Christian human beings. Women and children became the point of reference to describe the inferiority of non-Europeans. Patriarchy, Christianity, and white blood established the epistemic foundation of modernity and the colonial matrix of power: the justification to convert, appropriate, and exploit, and justified the expendability of human lives that were not needed or that refused to be integrated to the system; a system known today as Western modernity and capitalism grounded in Western Christianity (Catholic and Protestant, but not Eastern Orthodox Christians). Because each domain in which control was to be performed responds to the same purpose or global and imperial designs, each level is interrelated with the other three. Just devote a few minutes to focusing on one level and ask yourself how each related to the other. I assure you that you won't need instructions to find those connections! Last but not least, the imposition of the colonial matrix of power in each of its levels, in their interconnection, implies that societal forms of life and economy which the juggernaut of the colonial matrix of power confronts are pushed aside or erased – but not completely eradicated. And we are witnessing today, particularly among indigenous movements in South America and the Islamic world, that human subjectivities (which is not one and universal) die hard. Muslims and Indians have been relegated to the shelf of “traditions” in the rhetoric of modernity, in order to justify their repression or suppression. But today – surprise! – Indians are alive and well, and so are Muslims. Evo Morales was elected by an overwhelming majority, and so was Hamas. Democracy can no longer be managed by liberal political principles. Nor can socialism be managed by Marxist political principles.

Aspects of Spanish colonial literature and culture were fully-fledged instruments of colonization: they contributed to the control of subjectivity and the control of

knowledge – some more than others. Sepúlveda clearly justified violence to control economy and authority. De Vitoria was a Christian “liberal” (in terms that will emerge from the secular revolution) who worked hard on theological principles of international law. Las Casas was a defender of social justice but, like his contenders, he pushed aside subjectivity and did not take into account the input of the indigenous population. Guamán Poma de Ayala was one, and today the best-known case of decolonial thinking. He stood up and proposed to Philip III the need for a new chronicle in order to organize new forms of government that he labeled “*buen gobierno*.”

By this I mean that modernity/coloniality is an imperial package that, of necessity, generates decolonial thinking and action. But actions by themselves cannot be decolonial if they are not conceptualized as such. And decolonial conceptualization means to denounce the colonial matrix of power and to work toward forms of social organization that reinscribe the economy, political organization, gender and sexual relations, and subjectivity and knowledge of those who are being denied, who are declared racially inferior, and whose concept of social organization is considered lacking and, later on, as traditional.

The colonial matrix of power (or coloniality of power) – contrary to the alphabetic paradigm of the lettered city or the technological and communicative paradigm of cultural studies, mentioned above – may seem detached from the question of literature and culture. My argument is that if that is the case, it is just an illusion owing to the change of terrain that the coloniality of matrix is proposing. This change of terrain is a particular kind of decolonial critique. To simplify matters, I would propose the following. While Ángel Rama on the one hand, and Nestor García-Canclini, Beatriz Sarlo, and Jesús Martín Barbero on the other practiced a certain version of what we could call “critical theory” (in the case of Martín Barbero, directly connected to the Frankfurt School; García-Canclini draws from Pierre Bourdieu and Beatriz Sarlo, cultural studies in Birmingham and particularly from Raymond Williams), for Ángel Rama it was Michel Foucault who offered him the tools to conceive the archeology of knowledge in South America linked to the “lettered city” (parallel to what Said was doing at the same time in the United States).

At this juncture, Cornejo Polar’s concept of “cultural heterogeneity” and Quijano’s “coloniality of power” parted and opened up another paradigm. Cornejo Polar, like Quijano, found the seed of their feeling and thinking in Mariátegui and the long history of Indian, Spanish, and Creole tensions in the Andes. While Cornejo Polar has José María Arguedas as his second source of inspiration (which is not alien to Quijano’s intellectual trajectory), Quijano continues the legacy of dependency theory, which he reformulates and expands in the colonial matrix of power. Cornejo Polar and Quijano departed from the genealogy of thought that nourished the lettered city as well as cultural studies; and indirectly departed also from postcolonialism. While cultural studies, in Latin America, found their genealogical source of inspiration in European thinkers, Cornejo Polar and Quijano grounded theirs in the intellectual and political history of Latin American thinkers. In this regard, both shared the drive that nourished indigenous and Afro-Caribbean intellectuals who found the source of their

critical decolonial thinking first, in their own history of oppression, and secondly, in the history of slavery.

Coloniality of power as an *analytic concept* builds on a critical genealogy of thought that, in Latin America, emerged as a decolonial impulse with variegated faces. As I have already mentioned, this includes Mariátegui and dependency theory, but also the theology and philosophy of liberation that emerged in the late 1960s, and the strong presence of Frantz Fanon (1961). Fanon contributed to the familiarity of the concept of “decolonization.” While “decolonization” during the Cold War and in Asia and Africa described the struggle for independence in the British and French colonies, Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda (1988) proposed the decolonization of the social sciences. Paradoxically enough, Fals Borda was proposing to decolonize the social sciences at the very moment in which the social sciences (as a disciplinary and institutional formation) were being propelled into Latin America from the United States and embraced, by local “scientists” in Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia as a sign of “development and modernization.” The face of modernization and modernity was shown in the program of industrialization from the 1950s to the end of the 1960s, and the social sciences were part of the package: the pretense or illusion that, like in the First World, the Third World will have industrialization and a modern society needing the social sciences for their analysis and management!! Fals Borda thought that the introduction of the social sciences was, indeed, a particular sector of the colonial matrix of power that Quijano describes as “the coloniality of knowledge” (Quijano, 1992a) Thus, implicit in the *analytical concept* of the colonial matrix of power (or coloniality of power) is the *programmatic concept* of decoloniality. From Fals Borda on we are no longer talking about decolonization in the sense of the takeover of the state by the local elite (Creole, as in South America, or native, as in Asia and Africa), but of decolonization of knowledge and of being; which imply a decolonial subject that shifts political theory and political economy in another direction, non-capitalist and non-communist. From the perspective of decolonial thinking and projects, liberal capitalism and communist/statism are two coins of the same Western and post-Enlightenment currency. Two coins of Western imperial expansion: Western European and US imperialisms on the one hand, and Soviet Union imperialisms on the other. Decolonization of knowledge, however, does not mean that the state is no longer in question, but that the state, as controller of authority, depends on the enactment of the conception of knowledge (political theory). In Bolivia today we are witnessing, first and foremost, a radical decolonial epistemic shift and its effects on the organization of the state and the handling of the economy. Let us look at two examples of how decolonization of knowledge and decolonization of being are of crucial importance to the decolonization of the control of economy and of authority.

For liberal capitalism, land is private property and the individual (or the corporation) the sovereign proprietor. For the Marxist version of communism (by which I mean without the sense of community we find among the indigenous peoples around the world or in the Islamic concept of subjectivity and community), land cannot be private property (owned by individuals or corporations) but it is property of the state

given to the community. For indigenous people land cannot be property at all, neither private nor of the state. This is one of the central principles in Evo Morales's negotiation of natural gas and coca leaves, products of the land but not the land in itself. For liberal or Marxist political theory, the structure of the state is the same. The emphases are in the relationships between the state and the economy and in the function of the state in one or the other regime, democratic or socialist. For Morales, the state is neither. It is an empty structure that has to be filled with agents whose relationships with civil and political society are not that of the state functionary that "represents" sectors who are detached from their social and life experience (except when those represented are the economic elite to whom the "representers" belong, who have vested interests). This model of liberal political theory that, in the Soviet Union, was translated into clientelism and party membership reached its critical point in Bolivia; and Morales is restructuring the state precisely in that direction: that is why he will have as Minister of Foreign Relations a lawyer and activist in human rights; and as Minister of Education and Culture an Aymara intellectual and activist who wrote a book on the communal system as an alternative to the (neo-)liberal system (Patzí Paco, 2004). Community here is not a borrowing from Marxism/communism (and even less so from communitarian liberalism), but a recasting of the communitarian model of indigenous histories in the Andes. How are we to interpret Latin American literatures and cultures with this turn of events?

The notion of "modernity/coloniality" is an antidote to all previous debates. It de-links from the one-sided rhetoric of modernity (like the bright side of the moon that leaves its other side hidden) by introducing "coloniality" as its constitutive but hidden side. The hegemonic idea of one-sided modernity generates parallel alternatives: peripheral modernity, subaltern modernity, alternative modernities, and so on. All of them leave untouched the very imperial logic sustaining the idea of modernity. Coloniality, instead, reveals its darker side and opens up decolonial avenues for thinking, living, and acting – that there is a *singular modernity* (that singularity is not just modernity but *modernity/coloniality*), a singular modernity formed by a variegated histories of imperial/colonial relations. Therefore it is not necessary to invent alternative modernities, or peripherals, or posts, or subalterns, because that is what modernity/coloniality is: the triumphal rhetoric of salvation (by conversation, civilization, development, and market democracy) that needs inevitably to unfold (and to hide) the logic of coloniality. Interestingly enough for this *Companion*, modernity/coloniality is the vocabulary of a narrative that, contrary to the single narrative of modernity, has its historical foundation in the Atlantic world of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Western Europe, Western Africa, and the emergence of the Americas), instead of the European Renaissance and Enlightenment alone. This Eurocentered narrative, of course, has its right to exist, since it corresponds with the experience of Euro-American histories, but it does not have the right to be the narrative for the rest of the world, except in its imperial/colonial dimension. "Modernity" is a word that, just like "democracy" and many others, has a global scope owing to imperial expansion over five centuries. What then can be done?

Instead of conceiving alternative or peripheral modernities, what are needed are alternatives *to* modernity; that is, to the single narrative of modernity by a subject that is not universal and disincorporated but that has been and continued to be geohistorically and biographically dwelling in the history of Euro-America. If the narrative of a single modernity or of modernity at large anchors its locus of enunciation in Christian theological and secular egopolitics of knowledge (e.g., the hegemony of theology in the European Renaissance and of egology in the European enlightenment), the narrative of modernity/coloniality shifts the geography of reason and anchors its locus of enunciation in the decolonial politics of knowledge. Such politics needs to de-link from the imperial dominance of theological and egological categories of thought in which all structures of knowledge (from the European Renaissance to the Enlightenment and beyond) have theology and Cartesian egology as their basis. Decolonial knowledge shifts the reason and rationality that sustain and motivate knowledge.

For example, Jamaican scholar and intellectual Sylvia Wynter analyzes Frantz Fanon's concept of "sociogenesis." Sociogenesis is a way of de-linking from the ontological scientific limits of phylogenesis and ontogenesis. It brings another dimension to our understanding of what it means to be "human." "Scientific" discourse assumes that imperial definitions of "humanity" are what "we know" humanity is. What we understand by human and humanity are constructions of the European Renaissance and Enlightenment, based on the paradigmatic model of the European heterosexual male, which Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man¹ exemplified perfectly. What scientific phylogenetic and ontogenic analysis provide are just material information of a preconceived notion of Man and Human. Sociogenesis shows the imperial and Euro-centered assumptions of this notion, and opens up toward "the Human, after Man," as Wynter has it. For Chicana scholar and intellectual Chela Sandoval, epistemic de-linking is located in the limits of the modern and postmodern notion of the "subject" – the crisis of the modern subject announced by David Laing, Michel Foucault, and Fredric Jameson comes as a surprise to someone like Sandoval, who dwells in the experiences and legacies of "fractured colonial subjects" that are totally unnoticed by internal and regional European postmodern speculations. For Maori anthropologist, intellectual, and activist Linda T. Smith, the moment of de-linking is located in the "method." In tandem with Sandoval's "methodology of the oppressed," Smith focuses on "decolonizing methodology." Decolonizing methodology implies a de-linking from anthropological agendas which have been formed by the interest of anthropology as a discipline and anthropologists as academic scholars, to agendas that emerge from the decolonial needs of indigenous communities. albeit independent of each other.²

And allow me to repeat, out loud this time, a statement I have made several times but which has not yet been heeded: indigenous intellectuals do not represent all the indigenous people in the same way that white intellectuals do not represent all whites and women intellectuals do not represent all women, as queer intellectuals do not represent all queers. The statement is not heard because the concept of "representation" is on the way. What I am saying is simply that Wynter's, Sandoval's, and Smith's

arguments and claims are anchored in local histories of slavery, Aboriginals in New Zealand and Australia and Chicanos and Chicanos, in ways similar to which Foucault's, Arendt's, or Jameson's arguments and claims do not represent all homosexuals in France, Jews in Germany, or Marxists in the United States.

After Wynter, Sandoval, and Smith we can say that decolonial thinking based on the analytic "modernity/coloniality" is an alternative *to* modernity (as Arturo Escobar puts it) because the locus of enunciation has shifted to inhabit other bodies and other geo-histories (the colonial ones); not because "colonial modernities" are a different version of a paradigmatic and zero-sum of a neutral modernity. This is a radical and needed shift in the geography of reason. Without it (a shift that is a de-linking) we will remain locked in the battle between the universals and the particular, the center and the periphery, modernity and alternative modernities, etc., allowing some of us to believe that we inhabit a house of knowledge independent from the particular national-imperial language in which we think and write; independent of material inscriptions of history in our bodies and, finally, that we – as objective thinkers – have to be vigilant and denounce the fact that indigenous intellectuals do not represent all the Indians (and that Derrida does not represent all Algerians)!

The variety of alternative modernities is to the geopolitical epistemic spectrum what the hyphen is to the body-politics of knowledge. Let's read Lewis Gordon's observations on the social sphere of blackness:

Why, we may ask, is being black treated as antipathetic to being an American? This leads to the notion of irreconcilable doubleness, whereby being black does not equal being an American . . . the mainstream (i.e., White) American self-image is one of supposedly being an original site from which blacks play only the role of imitation. To be an imitation is to stand as secondary to another standard – namely the original or the prototype. We see this view of blacks in popular music, where the adjective "black" is added to things white to suggest imitation: black Jesus, black Mozart, Ms. Black America, and so on. (Gordon, 2006: 8).

The analogy is obvious: any "alternative" is derivative from the standard model of modernity, just as blackness (or any other hyphenated American) is derivative in relation to the standard idea of America. Even "Latin" America is derivative in relation to America. Gordon has put the finger on the body-politics of knowledge: aren't black philosophers just white philosophers who bring the naturalization of the hyphen to the level of coloniality of knowledge and coloniality of being?

Thus the variegated proposal for alternative modernities goes hand in hand with the hyphenated categorization of people along ethnic (and racialized) lines. Both the global distribution of alternative modernities in relation to the standard model and the global distribution of hyphenated people who do not quite fit the national and racial standard of a given country, as well as the global distribution of people by continents (e.g., Africa identified with blacks, Asia with "yellows," and the Americas and the Caribbean with indigenous people, and the population of European descent and sub-Saharan African descent) are caught in the web of modernity/coloniality and

in the racial matrix of imperial/colonial power. In other words, the question of whether there is one or several modernities brings to the fore the geopolitics of knowledge, while the question of people of color and continental divide (recently mobilized by massive migrations from poor to richer countries) put forward the bio-graphic (body)-politics of knowledge. This brings sensing into epistemology and, therefore, aesthetics – aisthesis, before the eighteenth century, refers to the senses and not to a particular sensibility related to what, in a given culture, is considered beautiful. Literature and culture are woven into the matrix and “Latin America” (or any other region) is not only an economic and political demarcation, but a subjective construction (of particular agents) as well as a source of subjective formations (of particular subjects).

Modernity/coloniality (Quijano, 1992; Mignolo, 2006) has been proposed as a departure and a de-linking from the illusion that there is *only one* totality that shall be seen either as a single modernity or as a standard modernity and its alternatives. The thesis here is that *there is no modernity without coloniality; coloniality is constitutive of modernity and not derivative*. There is a single modernity/coloniality that is the consequence of the geopolitical differential distribution of epistemic, political, economic, and aesthetic (e.g., sensing, subjectivity) power. Thus, modernity/coloniality is held together by the *colonial differences*: colonial differences, epistemic and ontological, are constructed in the rhetoric of modernity – inferior beings (colonial ontological difference), racially or sexually, are beings not well suited for knowledge and understanding (colonial epistemic difference).³ Modernity/coloniality, in other words, is what unites, *like conjoined twins in a differential power relation*, Spain and the New World, England and India, the United States and Iraq; what unites whites and blacks, whites and Indians, whites and Muslims, white and yellow races. Would it then be possible to think of another type of relations between the New World, India, and Iraq and between blacks, Indians, Muslims, and the yellow race that does not depend on imperial whiteness? This is one move proposed by decolonial thinking as a programmatic of which the very concept of modernity/coloniality and the colonial matrix of power is its analytic counterpart. Which means that the very concept of coloniality of power is already a decolonial move that, subsequently, opens up the gates for imagining possible futures rather than just resting on the celebratory moment of critical explanation of what the social world really is like.

History seen in this way, when we ask whether there is a single or multiple (and alternative) modernity, is a moot question. Thus, is “modernity” a concept of a self-serving narrative constructed on the experience, desires, and expectations of a regional group of people identified with the European Renaissance and European Enlightenment, or an objective historical period independent of the narrative that describes and explains it? Because the emphasis of all narratives (either celebratory or critical) of modernity privileges the enunciated over the enunciation, modernity became an historical agent itself, an entity, a thing, a cloud that, like the fog of Chernobyl, moves with the winds of imperial expansion. When modernity as a historical agent or as the codified moment of the historical modern self (the momentum that brings salvation, happiness, civilization, progress and development, and democracy) is pinched in its

incantatory effects and the invisible hands moving the puppets become visible, we realize that what is left is, once again, a very geopolitical- and body-political-anchored locus of enunciation that celebrates the universality of the enunciated.

II

A companion to “Latin American literature and culture” demands – today – that we revisit several assumptions I mapped out and critiqued in Section I. We will revisit these first assumptions because the very idea of the colonial period and of modern Latin America (that is, the period of nation-building in the nineteenth century) are mixed up with some views and conceptions of modernity, as is the single movement of world history. What, then, can “coloniality” do for us? How can this concept help us in organizing this “companion”?

Let us begin by exploring how our perception of “Latin American literature and culture” may change with regard to the presumption that there is one single modernity and that some modernities may be peripheral, alternative, or subaltern; and that there is an America that is “Latin” in relation to a totality, America, which is not “Latin” – somehow similar to the logic that Lewis Gordon unveiled for the hyphenated Afro-America or black Mozart. Although “Latin” America is a concept introduced in the second half of the nineteenth century, we shall start from this concept because the present companion is of “Latin” American literature and culture. Thus, the standard perception could be described and summarized as both an homogeneous “culture” opposed to the Anglo component of the Americas, as Samuel Huntington recast it after Hegel’s canonical distinction between the two Americas; or as the homogeneous “culture” that defines the identity of the people that identified themselves as “Latin” Americans and of which its literature is a fundamental manifestation of the imaginary of sub-continental identification.

How would things look from the perspective of the colonial matrix of power? The canonical “colonial period” (ca. 1492–1810) or “de la colonia a la independencia,” as Mariano Picón Salas canonized it, was first dominated by the Spaniards and Portuguese and then by the Creole elites of Iberian descent. Until recently (perhaps since Murray and Adorno’s edition of Guamán Poma de Ayala’s *Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno*, 1982, as well as the Franklin Pease edition in *Biblioteca Ayacucho*, vol. 75, 1980), indigenous “literary” and cultural production were hardly taken into account. If they were, a couple of texts like *The Popol Wuj* appeared in a short section of literary and cultural histories, as *pre-Columbian* literature. *Popol Wuj* is a text composed in alphabetic writing around 1550 and only discovered at the beginning of the eighteenth century (see Chapter 3 in this volume). Histories of Latin American literatures and cultures have been written, since the nineteenth to almost the end of the twentieth century, by Creoles of Spanish or Portuguese descent for whom the history of “Latin” America began with the discovery of the region, and whatever was there before.

What do these examples tell us? First, and in general, they are particular cases of the control of knowledge and subjectivity (and, of course, gender and sexuality). Think

about Sepúlveda's argument in favor of the just war; a clear case of control of authority, denying the enemy even the possibility of argument. Just war opens up the space for the creation of administrative institutions, pushing aside existing forms of social organization because dominant narratives declared them to be barbarians or weak people easily persuaded by the Devil. Think of Francisco de Vitoria. He was working toward a system of international law that would allow Spaniards to own land without affecting the rights of the Indians. John Locke, in the next century, would express the same concern for the interest of the emerging British Empire. Indians' relation to the land, and the fact that landownership was alien to them, did not cross the minds of either Vitoria or Locke. Las Casas was concerned with excessive violence and also with morals. The *pecado nefando* (sodomy) in which Indians indulged was Las Casas's nightmare. And of course, Spaniards never understood the complementarity of gender (the sun and the moon) in Indian cosmology. Christian cosmology was blinded by original sin and the virginity of Mary as principles to control subjectivities of Christians and non-Christians alike. Las Casas's contributions to the formation of the colonial matrix of power was in the area of gender and sexuality, and knowledge and subjectivity. Sepúlveda and Vitoria contributed instead to the institutionalization of control and authority; and Vitoria to the control of economy and authority through international law. The three of them pushed aside the statements, beliefs, ideas, principles of knowledge, social and political organization, subjective formations, and so on, of indigenous intellectuals like themselves, and indigenous people in general, at all levels. Ethical and political questions remained within the colonial matrix of power itself and the debates, among imperial agents, of how to cause least harm to the Indians, respecting as much as possible their rights to property, but not to the point to which Spaniards would be deprived of what they thought they deserved. Guamán Poma de Ayala was in confrontation with the colonial matrix of power, and his chronicle, political treatise, and model of a new government remains the foundation of decolonial thinking. Guamán Poma de-linked from the rules of the game that Sepúlveda, Las Casas, and Vitoria were playing and proposed new rules for good government. His proposal was a decolonial project articulated in border thinking. The Spanish would not listen to him. The situation does not prove that Guamán Poma was wrong, rather it proves that the Spanish were deaf and blind to the possibility of an Indian having anything of interest to propose; or to the possibility that Indians had rights to make any claim (see Chapters 5 and 6 in this volume).

Apart from a few Aztec and Mayan codices, nothing was written by indigenous people that was not "colonial." Most of the extant codices were produced under Spanish rules. Indigenous production coexisted and was mixed up with the cultural production (texts, architecture, music, painting, etc.) of the Spanish and Portuguese invaders. However, the same logic that made "modernity" visible (and modernity meant European history in all its manifestations) at the same time also made non-European histories and ways of thinking invisible. Placing the *Popol Wuj* as a pre-Hispanic or pre-Columbian text was one such move. From the beginning of the 1980s, the situation started to change and art historians, anthropologists, ethno-historians,

and literary and cultural critics contested previous history. In their contestations, they helped make visible one of the consequences of coloniality of knowledge and of being – to relegate, silence, and dismiss the knowledge and subjective formations of indigenous people throughout the Americas. The situation is similar with people of African descent, and today – although on a different scale – with Latinos and Latinas in the United States.

Parallel to the historical work of European scholars and intellectuals, indigenous people began to assert themselves as human beings, intellectuals, activists, and political leaders, taking their destiny in their own hands. Their self-affirmation did not come so much in “literature” (as was the case for Creoles, *mestizos/as*, and immigrants of European descent who flocked to the continent from the second half of the nineteenth century) but in intellectual and political terms – first they requested land rights, then linguistic and cultural rights and, finally, epistemic rights. Indigenous video-makers, like CEFREC in Bolivia and the *Amawtay Wasi* (House of Wisdom, also called Universidad Intercultural de los Pueblos y Naciones Indígenas del Ecuador), are two outstanding achievements of epistemological dimension (Amawtay Wasi, 2004). The first, because video makers are claiming the right to knowledge by bypassing the lettered city and alphabetic writing that served well both colonial administrators and officers of the colonial nation-states (i.e., when the logic of coloniality was rearticulated through the nation-states controlled by Creoles of European descent). The second, because it is a claim that, taking away the monopoly of the colonial viceroalties and, later, that of the colonial nation-states, higher education can be controlled through theology and egology; that is, the epistemic authority of God and of secular reason. Sor Juana was caught at the critical period of that transition, as a woman (see Chapter 10). But this is not all, because the indigenous impact on the literary domain emerged as a complement to video makers and the planning of *Amawtay Wasi* (see Chapter 32). Today, the indigenous social movements in the Andes and the presidency of Evo Morales in Bolivia, the reestablishment of the Zapatistas in Southern Mexico, the undeniable presence of indigenous ways of life, of thinking, of doing, of acting, are repressed beneath the rhetoric of modernity. Modernity/coloniality is a coin with two faces, the same in the center as the periphery. In other words, center and periphery are so because modernity/coloniality became the rhetoric of salvation and the logic of oppression that managed the world order in the past 500 years. In this regard, the indigenous contributions to global history made and being made by indigenous people in South (Latin?) America goes hand in hand with the revival of indigenous struggles in North America, and parallels the indigenous struggle in New Zealand and Australia. The authors of “el boom de la literatura latinoamericana,” progressive writers and intellectuals of the 1960s and 1970s, are disoriented. Mario Vargas Llosa lost his balance after his defeat by Fujimori and seems to understand less and less of what Hugo Chávez and Evo Morales stand for, whether one is for or against their politics. Writing in favor of Nación Camba, in Bolivia, and disparaging the figure of Morales, Vargas Llosa epitomizes the radical bent toward the right of the Creole/*blancoide* intelligentsia of Latin America. A recent article by Carlos Fuentes,

not as extreme as Vargas Llosa's, reveals that "Latin American" [*blancoide*] writers have a hard time dealing with the emergence of the indigenous population (at all levels of social life). In compensation for the history of the "boom" and its ideology residing in the past, we are witnessing the reemergence of indigenous intellectuals who are rewriting their own history, rewriting the analysis of society, and reviving forgotten indigenous intellectuals. The fact is that Indians are not exactly Latin. These writers have not yet pay attention to the black "menace." But it is coming.

When Mariano Picón Salas entitled his book *De la conquista a la independencia* (From conquest to independence) in a way that became the frame of 300 years of history in Spanish and Portuguese America, continental and insular, he did not include the Haitian Revolution (1804) in his scheme. The problem was that Haiti was inhabited mainly by blacks of African descent. And in the mainstream mentality, blacks (like Indians) are not exactly Latin, and certainly not Spanish or Portuguese-Americans either. It was a black colony that became an independent country. The language was French/Creole, while "Latin" America was forged upon the image of two defeated empires and their respective languages, Spain and Spanish, and Portugal and Portuguese. Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Haiti were left out of the loop and, for that reason, Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon were not included in the "Latin" American canon. For the same reason, writers such as Afro-Colombian Manuel Zapata Olivella and Afro-Costa-Rican Quincey Duncan were left out of the picture and are only recently receiving the attention they deserve. The US State Department is more attentive to the emergence of Afro-Latinity than scholars, intellectuals, and journalists in "Latin" America.⁴

For historical reasons that one can guess at but which have not been explored in detail, the French and British Caribbean have a very visible and strong intellectual tradition that Padget Henry recently summarized as "Afro-Caribbean philosophy" (Henry, 2003). Afro-Caribbean philosophy is different from European continental philosophy. While in Europe philosophy has its academic and disciplinary rules, Caribbean philosophy comes in all forms: literature, oral tradition, Bob Marley, voodoo, and Rastafarianism; political essays by Fanon and Césaire; historical narratives like C. L. R. James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938). All this potent intellectual, literary, and cultural production is constantly left out of the "Latin" literary and cultural mentality, that is, of Spanish and Portuguese stock in languages and memories. In that regard, do not ask what "Latin" American literature and culture *are*. Ask and look for what they *do*. And what they do is to enact a politics of inclusion and exclusion.

III

What is the job, then, of a companion to Latin American literature and culture? The answer is not inscribed in some transcendental place, of course, but comes from the needs in the field and the decision of the editors and contributors as to how to fulfill them.

It could be helpful to compare the recent *Blackwell Companion to African-American Studies* with *The Blackwell Companion to Latin American Literature and Culture*. The first has a disciplinary orientation marked by the word “studies,” while the second emphasizes the contour of a fuzzy domain mapped by a set of practices, “literature and culture,” in a geopolitical space (Latin America). However, as we have seen above, “Latin” in this context is the sphere of “white Latin” in South America and the Caribbean, in contradistinction to Indians and Afro. “Latinity,” in other words, is the hegemonic literature and culture that affirmed its identity, repressing, on the one hand, “Indianness” and “Africanness” and, on the other, confronting “Anglicity.” In between all of these, the emergence of Latino/as in the United States and Afro-Latinos forces a question mark on what are we considering at this point to be “Latin American literature and culture,” and why.

The “why” is a question that is readily addressed in *The Blackwell Companion to African-American Studies*. In the introduction Gordon and Gordon pressed the question of method and scholarly rigor as they moved “from foci on social scientific approaches to explorations in the humanities and now, in some instances, to the life sciences, such as biology, medicine and epistemology” (2006: xxi). The authors observe that, after the civil rights movement, proponents of black power saw their task as economic, political, and pedagogical. They continue by noting that this orientation “took the form of black communities seeking control over their own and their children’s education, which led to discussion not only of the *form* and *structure* of that education but also its *content*.” And they conclude with a programmatic statement: “We would call this effort the goal of *decolonizing the minds of black people*” (Gordon and Gordon, 2006: xxi).

“Decolonizing the mind” is not a project alien to literature (and therefore, of culture). As such, it was articulated in the mid-1980s by African writer Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1986). Neither is it alien to “Latin American culture.” “Decolonization of scholarship” was one of the fighting fronts – as I already mentioned – of Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda and, in a parallel fashion, of Paolo Freyre’s “methodology of the oppressed.” And Quijano proposed “decolonization of knowledge” as a logical consequence of the analysis of the logic of coloniality and as epistemological reconstitution. He wrote:

The critique of the European paradigm of rationality/modernity is indispensable, even urgent. But the critique will be doubtful if it only consists of a simple negation of all its categories . . . It is necessary to extricate oneself from the linkages between rationality/modernity and coloniality, first of all, and definitely from all power which is not constituted by free decisions made by free people. It is the instrumental use of reason to control power, of colonial power in the first place, which produced distorted paradigms of knowledge and spoiled the liberating promises of modernity. The alternative, then, is clear: the obliteration of the coloniality of world power. Epistemological decolonization is needed, first of all, to clear the way for new intercultural communication; for interchanging experiences and meaning as the basis of another rationality which may legitimately pretend to some universality. Nothing is less rational, finally, than the pre-

tension that the specific cosmic vision of a particular ethnicity should be taken universal rationality. (Quijano, 1992: 19)

Could the *Blackwell Companion to Latin American Literature and Culture* be a decolonizing project? Not all its contributors will endorse such a project. Each author has her and his own answer. Whatever the individual responses are, the reader will have their own agenda in mind. Most likely, that agenda will be guided by some naturalized principles or ideas of what Latin America is and what its literature and culture should be. In this case, the reader may expect to know “more” about an existing entity called Latin America. I would like to close by inviting the reader to shift their presuppositions and, instead of thinking that there is an entity called Latin America whose literature and culture they will learn more about, to think instead that the literature and culture that this volume brings forward is part of the construction and survival of an artificial entity called Latin America. The epistemic shift I am suggesting is already underway. Once the colonial matrix of power is identified, its decolonization is a necessary consequence. The unveiling of the colonial matrix of power, in Quijano’s ground-breaking work, is in itself a decolonial move. The colonial matrix of power could not have been revealed from the very epistemic imperial principles that produced it, even if those very principles were deployed to perform a critique of their results. Marx’s brilliant unveiling of the logic of capital, for example, was an operation performed from the very principles of knowledge that brought capitalism into existence, and from the very perspective of European history. That is, Marx was conformed by the history of Europe and by the marks that that history left on his body – Marx’s critical thought is, just like anybody else’s, grounded in the historical marks left in his body by the position he occupied in his society. Quijano had a different grounding, both in his body and in the history of his society. He is not German and his first language (in the sense of *idioma*) is not German. His body and historical experience carry the mark of a particular imperial/colonial history, that of the Andes. And that means that Quijano experienced imperial capitalism in the history of the colonies, while Marx experienced capitalism in its very core. This is one example of decolonial epistemic shift in its geopolitical domain. I am inviting the reader to choose his or her seat when looking at the literature and cultures of “Latin” America. I will offer, in closing, a few more possibilities.

Let’s think of Fanon’s skin and Anzaldúa’s borderland (Mignolo, 2005a; Milian, 2006). In both cases there is a decolonial shift in the body-politics and the geopolitics of knowledge. Anzaldúa’s borderland (geopolitical shift) goes hand in hand with the “new *mestiza* consciousness” (body-political shift, which is simultaneously racial and sexual). If the borderland is the “colonial wound – ‘una herida abierto’ where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds” (Anzaldúa, 1987: 25), then the conjunction of borderland (geopolitics) and bio-graphy (gender–sexuality–ethnicity) is not a social phenomenon “to be studied” (by whom, from where, under which epistemic presuppositions?), but a locus of epistemic enunciation that now coexists in conflictive struggle with Cartesian overarching principles in which reason has no

geohistorical location and is not incarnated in the gender, sexuality, and race (racism) in which the body is conformed. Similar observations could be made about Fanon. The border between black skin and white mask is the border of the colonial difference at all levels, but also at the epistemic level: knowledge and epistemology are located in the white-skinned body, not in the black. And that is why the black-skinned body has two kinds of options: to become white or, like Fanon, to unveil the colonial racial matrix and its epistemic consequences. That is the reason why Fanon began his argument addressing the question of language, in which epistemology and knowledge are located. Before Fanon, Afro-American W. E. B. Dubois conceptualized as “double consciousness” a phenomenon and an experience that, for Fanon, was the borderland and the new *mestiza*, and the space where the black skin grates with the white skin and bleeds. But also in Bolivia, between 1960 and 1975, Aymara intellectual Fausto Reinaga made a solitary although monumental effort to shift both the geopolitics and the body-politics of knowledge. Rejecting Christian and liberal modes of oppression also rejected Marxism as a mode of liberation. He reclaimed the negated and silenced perspective of indigenous people, as valid as the one of European people in their variety (Christians, liberals, and Marxists) as well as the clones of the European variety (e.g., the Creoles of European descent in Bolivia.) I could go on and on, bringing to the fore other examples from Native Americans in the United States, the Fourth Nation in Canada, or Aborigines in New Zealand and Australia; from the past of black radical intellectuals in the Atlantic and in Africa. And I could also look at the genealogy of decolonial thinking in the Middle East, the Mahgreb, or India to show that the epistemic hegemony of Europe is ending its cycle and remains one epistemology among others. “Latin” American literature and culture can of course be looked at from *the traditional epistemology of modernity*; but there are other and more convenient games in town for people who would prefer to decolonize themselves and contribute to the decolonization of the world including, of course, as Fanon insisted, the imperial colonizer themselves; colonizer either from the left, the right, or the center.

In sum, while the European intellectual tradition had in St. Thomas Aquinas and René Descartes two monuments of the rules of knowing (and understanding) and knowledge (and the understood), rules that structured the hegemonic and imperial perspective on the world, in all of its domains (from political economy to political theory, from religious believers to Freud’s unconscious), the decolonial tradition of which the genealogy of its thoughts is yet unknown but not at all nonexistent (just silenced by the monuments of European epistemic imperialism), is on the march. Latin America itself was conceived from the European perspective, even when the Creoles from European descent, in South America, acquiesced (Mignolo, 2005b). Now a shift is taking place, the decolonial shift, that put forward coexisting paradigms in which denied rationalities rearticulate themselves on the unintended consequences of Western epistemology. Aztec and Guamán Poma, Ottobah Cugoano, Frantz Fanon, Fausto Reinaga, Gloria Anzaldúa, and the Zapatistas are some of the signposts of the decolonial project.

Today it is obvious that “Latin” America was an ideological and political project of the elites, Creoles of Spanish descent, and mixed-blood, European-minded *mestizos* (Bautista, 2005). The “literature” that emerged from that project covers a wide spectrum, from internal colonialism to decolonial dissent. But Afro- and indigenous projects remained uninvited to the feast. Thus the spectrum had changed already. A variety of projects are on the table, many proposed by intellectuals of European descent in South America and the Caribbean, others by indigenous intellectuals and activists, and others by intellectuals of African descent in Brazil, the Andes, and the Caribbean (the Spanish, British, and French Caribbean). Concepts in the United States like “modernity” (Dussel, 2005), “interculturality” (Macas, 2004; Walsh, 2002), “coloniality of being” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007), “hubris of the zero point” (Castro-Gómez, 2005), and “Latinidad” (Grosfoguel, 2006; Mignolo, 2006) are already opening up the decolonial horizon and taking us beyond “Latin” America, toward a pluralist America where Latins and Anglos of European descent will coexist – economically and politically – with indigenous languages and cultures from southern Chile to Canada, and with those of African descent in Brazil, the Andes, the Caribbean, and North America. The Zapatistas’ quiet but relentless work, currently invested in education (EZLN, 2007), are showing that coexistence is possible and how it could work. Evo Morales, in Bolivia, is moving in the same direction. Afro-Brazilians, in Bahía, already have a similar vision of the future. A companion to “Latin” American literature – at the beginning of the twenty-first century – should be also a companion to subaltern projects (non-managerial but dialogic) and concepts, with the aim of a democratic and truly just world.

NOTES

- 1 (<http://leonardodavinci.stanford.edu/submissions/clabaugh/history/leonardo.html>).
- 2 Sylvia Wynter, “Toward the sociogenic principle: Fanon, identity, the puzzle of conscious experience, and what it is like to be ‘black,’” in I. Durán-Cogan et al. (eds), *National Identities and Sociopolitical Changes in Latin America* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 30–65; Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Linda T. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People* (London: Zed Books, 1999).
- 3 On colonial ontological and colonial epistemic difference, see Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “On the coloniality of Being: contributions to the development of a concept,” *Cultural Studies*, 21:2/3 (2007): 240–70.
- 4 (<http://usinfo.state.gov/wh/Archive/2005/Feb/28-95114.html>).

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